AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT

Nihil Obstat:

H. Canonicus Forbes,

Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur:

Joannes Ritchie,

Vic-Gen.

Glasguae,

die 15 *Octobris*, 1928.

W8

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Abridged and adapted from
RETRAITE annuelle de huit jours
par R. P. Longhaye, S.J.

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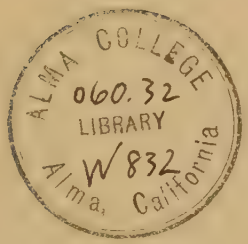

LONDON
SANDS & CO.
15 KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN
AND EDINBURGH
1928

Made in Great Britain

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AN EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT

I

PRELIMINARY MEDITATION

Dispositions for Retreat

We are about to enter upon our annual retreat, in which we have to cover the ground that was laid out by St. Ignatius for a period of thirty days in the brief space of eight. Consequently it may be thought that the devoting of one meditation to preliminary considerations is a waste of time. But, far from that, the preliminary meditation will serve the very useful purpose of getting us into the spirit of what follows. Therefore :—

I.—*Before prayer prepare thy soul : and be not as a man that tempteth God.* (Ecclus. xviii. 23.) For the last twelve months we have been employed in working for the good of others, and this work has been mostly temporal. Now we are to work for our own good, and that work will be entirely spiritual. We have seen our projects succeed or fail ; and are no doubt full of ideas by which we can make the successful ones more successful still, or plans for the revision of those that have failed. We are only human, our work is exceedingly interesting ; and here we are asked to dismiss it entirely from our mind and devote our attention to matters which ought to be more interesting still, but which—alas for the weakness of human nature !—are by no means so. To do this effectually requires a strong effort of will—a stronger effort than unassisted human nature is capable of making. We are constantly urging those committed

to our care to give a moment's reflection before commencing their prayers. This is as it should be. But if a moment's reflection is necessary before our morning or night prayers, surely an hour's reflection is not out of place before embarking upon an eight days' course of prayer. So we may take as the key-note of this reflection the preliminary prayer of the Divine Office in the breviary : *Do thou, O Lord, open my lips that I may praise thy Holy Name ; rid my heart of all vain, perverse and distracting thoughts ; enlighten my mind, move my heart, to the end that I may make my retreat worthily, attentively and devoutly, and thus deserve to be regarded with favour in the sight of thy divine Majesty.*

II.—A retreat is a good test of our sincerity in spiritual matters. We often say in our prayers : *I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ.* In practice, it is to be feared, it is far otherwise. So far otherwise is it, and so strongly is human nature attached to this world that, were the choice offered us here and now, most of us would elect to remain in this present life, with all its troubles and difficulties. Just at this moment, however, it is not a question of dissolution and being with Christ for ever, but of remaining here and thinking about Him for eight days. Then, when the retreat begins to pall upon us and spirituality to become a weariness of spirit, we may hear the voice of our divine Lord : *What ? Could you not watch one hour with me ?* (Matt. xxvi. 40.)

III.—We have to ask, with St. Paul : *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?* (Acts ix. 6.) That is, we have to endeavour to discover the divine will in our own regard. And the first step in that direction must be the elimination of all inordinate affections. These can be classified under four headings : gratification of sense, gratification of intellect, lack of restraint over the heart, satisfaction of self-love. They can be further reduced to two :

sensuality and pride ; and indeed can be summed up in one : self-love.

It is evident, then, that I must endeavour, as far as in me lies, to eradicate these inordinate affections before even attempting to discover the divine will in my own regard. For, the wilful affection for even one of them will place an obstacle in the way of my discovery of the divine will which I know would disapprove it. And, if I am only half-resolved to make a sacrifice asked of me, I run great risk of minimizing the divine will in my own eyes, in order to make it accord with my cherished desire.

This eradication of inordinate affections does not mean that they will not be there ; but that they will not be there with my consent—and still less with any desire on my part to yield to them.

At first sight there would appear to be a vicious circle here. I can only ascertain the divine will with certainty after ridding myself of inordinate affections. But how can I rid myself of them unless I know the divine will already ? Not perfectly, but sufficiently to know that the affections are inordinate. Commencing from this point, I must work loyally for their complete elimination. My reward will be that every struggle will render my knowledge clearer and more fruitful. A man does not set to work before he begins to see his way ; and the better he works the clearer the way becomes. He purifies his heart under a first indispensable light in his soul ; and this light increases in the soul in the same measure as he continues to purify the heart. Thus there is no vicious circle, but action and reaction of two forces conjointly, each of which fortifies the other.

St. Ignatius would have me enter upon the Exercises as into a combat. I can come out victorious ; but only on one condition : that I am resolved to conquer myself. This initial resolution will advance me two

steps. The first, defensive : resistance to inordinate affections, entire offering of myself to God. The second, offensive : " going counter," the strengthening of my defences by prayer ; prayer that God will thwart these affections and desires—in spite of myself, if necessary.

II

FOUNDATION AND FIRST PRINCIPLE

The End of Man

Man was created . . . to save his own soul. Three ideas are conveyed here: My *condition* necessarily resulting from my origin—coming from God, I belong to God. My *duty* determined by my condition—belonging to God, I must live for God. My *destiny*, reward of duty rightly fulfilled—I am going to God.

So I place myself in spirit in the presence of God and pray for light—a light that will bring such conviction to my intellect as to move my heart to resolution. How many truths are there—familiar, trite, known by heart—of which I have hitherto made no use; but which are inexhaustible and ever leave something to be discovered? May God so help me now, that these truths may sink deeper and deeper into my heart!

I.—My true condition results from my origin and that origin was God. He created me, therefore I am His creature. God was the first cause of my body which, traced backwards through intervening generations, came from that primitive slime of the earth out of which He formed the body of Adam. (Gen. ii. 7.) God was the immediate cause of my soul without any intervening agent. Thus, soul and body, I am the handiwork of God. With truth then I can call this His first benefit—the necessary foundation for all others.

As it was by the power of God that I came to life, so

it is by the same power that I continue to live. He not only united my body and soul that first time, but He actually does so at every moment of my existence. To annihilate me He has no need of positive action, He has but to withdraw His sustaining hand. At this very moment, while I am thinking of Him, He is giving me not only the power to think but the mind with which to do so.

Such being my origin my condition follows logically : having been created, I am a creature and therefore in a state of perpetual dependence. It depended upon God whether my soul should be created at all ; having been created, it depends on Him that it should not return to the nothingness whence it came. I know this last will not happen, but only because He does not will that it should. I depend on God for the continued union of soul and body, *i.e.*, that I am still living ; He will, in like manner, determine their separation—my death, in fact. When ? In His own good time, the day and hour of which I cannot foretell. It is His secret : the great, undeniable sign of my dependence.

Again : having been endowed with life, my dependence on Almighty God for its continuance is manifest at every breath I draw, every pulsation of my heart—if I will but recognize it. They are all counted and will cease at the moment determined by God and known to Him alone. That moment will find me powerless to avert it : practical proof of my dependence !

More than all must I recognize in this dependence a duty : to make it the guiding principle of my life. I came from God, therefore I belong to God. This impression cannot be too deeply graven on my mind. I belong to God *because He created me, i.e.*, called me from nothing. We have nothing of the same order in our own experience. The servant is said to belong to his master, the horse to its owner, the vessel to the potter who fashioned it. But either of them might say to

him who asserts his rights over them : " I only partially belong to you after all ; you merely diverted to your service something that existed before ; you did not make me according to my whole substance." Can I say this to my Creator ?

Not only in general am I dependent on God, but also in detail : soul, body, senses, abilities, every moment of my time even—all are gifts of God.

This dependence is essential, inalienable. Since God has created me, His absolute dominion over me is necessary to His own glory ; it is part of the essential order of things ; inviolable as God Himself, who could not derogate from or renounce it without ceasing to be God.

And it is at once rigorous and glorious. It sums up the whole duty of man. I have no rights against God, and to act as though I had is not only to rob but to withdraw myself from Him. On the other hand, how glorious ! Practically I am free—free to do or not to do. God does me the honour of permitting me to act upon the truth, not merely to submit to it. My dependence on God alone frees me from dependence on myself, others, things—the most complete independence possible for a creature. Some cry : " Neither God nor master ! " but I wish Him to be my Master, not only because it is right and just, but because it is the indispensable condition of my having no other.

II.—Just as my condition results from my origin, so my duty results from my condition—that of a creature who is still free, who is dependent but with an intelligent, willing dependence.

As the handiwork of the divine Wisdom I must have been created for some end or object which, as a free and intelligent creature, it behoves me to pursue voluntarily and deliberately.

Since God created me He is my Master. I am not my

own nor is my life my own. Both belong to God and it is for Him alone to direct them.

To ask wherein my duty consists is to ask what my end is to be ; and that, like the end of every creature, is God. Any other end would be unworthy of Him and indeed of myself. Coming from God as I do, all the works of my hands, all the powers of my mind, all the affections of my heart should tend to Him ; my will should conform to His ; I should endeavour to be perfect even as He is perfect. (Matt. v. 48.) To live for Him entirely ; such is my duty in general—and it is imposed on me by all I know of His nature and my own.

My duty in particular is laid down for me in the laws God has made—natural, positive, the Commandments, the precepts of the Gospel. It is summed up in the opening words of the Exercises : Man was created to praise, reverence, and serve his Creator and Lord.

To praise Almighty God : what is more just, more becoming, more easy ?

I must also reverence God Himself and all connected with Him—His Word, His worship, those who represent or are consecrated to Him, my own person *His temple*. (1 Cor. iii. 16.) I must ever bear in mind my real relationship to Him : who He is, what I am. Reverence is humility.

I have also to serve Him by my obedience in doing *what* He wishes, or at least *what* He allows. This should be done with fidelity ; in that I do it *as* He wishes, and also *because* He wishes it, *i.e.*, with perfect purity of intention. In this is included the duty of accepting all that it may seem good to Him to send me.

There are many who lament their inability to understand why they were sent into the world at all and what they are here to do. I understand both, and should regard it as a blessing that I do.

It is important to consider the universal and exclusive

nature of this duty of service. It is not one duty among many, nor even my principal duty: it is my only duty. Its nature or circumstances are only accidents. Though I may have a thousand things to do I have really only one: to serve God. It is not a question of serving God *before* I do these things, nor of doing them *and* serving God, but of serving God *in* doing them all. Thus I have literally nothing at all to do except serve God and so prove my love for Him. Anything in my conduct that conflicts with my duty is positive disorder and wrong; and anything I deliberately undertake which is not entered upon, at least in pursuance of the intention I have already formed of serving God, is, at the very lightest, negative disorder, and, as such, unprofitable, because it is outside my duty and therefore inconsistent with my condition as a creature.

And as my past rises before my mind's eye, what is left for me to do except implore the mercy of God?

III.—From my condition of man results my duty; and on my faithful and exact performance of that duty depends my final and eternal destiny—my salvation.

My salvation! I must ever bear in mind that I am not considering the destiny of others or even of the world at large, but *my own*. And I have to decide what that destiny is to be: heaven or hell, which? for there is no middle course. My past life, such as it was, would have already determined that question had a period been put to it at any given moment. But I am still here and it still remains with me to decide whether I am to be saved or lost. And up to my very last moment I shall remain a man who has still to work out his salvation—a man who, without a special revelation, which I dare not promise myself, is not and will not be certain of it.

My salvation! There is no interest in life to be compared with that. It is an elementary fact, the

first and last word of every mission, of every retreat. What great need then have I constantly to recall those words of our Lord : *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26.)

And how is my soul to be saved? By doing my duty as it should be done. I must live for God, not for myself; depend upon Him, not in theory but in practice; not here, there, nor occasionally, but first, last, and all the time. My whole life must be a perpetual sacrifice under the triple form of praise, reverence, and service. This is the way of salvation and there is no other. *Who is the man that desireth life? . . . (let him) turn away from evil and do good.* (Ps. xxxiii. 13–15.) *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* (Matt. xix. 17.) But it is so difficult! Not a doubt about it : *How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life.* (Matt. vii. 14.) But do I want to get there? Yes or No?

My salvation, if I attain to it, will be due solely to the infinite goodness of my Creator and Lord. He may well require all the praise, reverence and service I can render to Him, for they are His right : *The Lord hath made all things for himself.* (Prov. xvi. 4.) It will increase His accidental glory, but can be of no positive benefit to Him. All the advantage will be mine—if I desire it for myself as He wishes it for me. That is the end for which I was created : that I might save my own soul.

Thus the choice is offered me : to live for God or to live for myself; to save my soul or lose it. How easy would the decision be, were it not for original sin, pride, and sensuality—enemies of God and myself. In short, two forces contend for possession of my free-will : love of God and love of self. If the latter gain the day, I part for ever from my better self—the self of grace and right reason, the self that was destined for heaven

and has now lost it. In the words of our Lord : *He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.* (John xii. 25.)

Colloquy.—O my God, my Sovereign and my Master, who in thine infinite goodness didst create me to be happy for ever with Thee in heaven : I confess this truth ; I adore it ; I glory in it. Give me the courage to act upon it by my absolute dependence on Thee.

III

Creatures

Although I stand ever in the presence of God, yet between Him and myself are interposed an infinite number of beings which, in one way or another, can influence my thoughts, feelings, and actions. I have therefore to consider how I should regard them, as from the point of view of one who is endeavouring to work out his salvation by the service of God.

These beings include everybody and everything except God and myself—persons with whom I have to deal, material things with which I have to do, human activities in which I am concerned, surroundings or circumstances by which I am influenced, situations in which I find myself.

So I place myself in spirit, like our Lord, on *a very high mountain*; above me my Creator and Lord; at my feet *all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.* (Matt. iv. 8.)

Then I will pray for light to understand the condition and object of all these things; how I ought to act with respect to them; and also for courage to give practical effect to the light so given me.

I.—All these things, animate or inanimate, are, like myself, creatures. The same may be said even of such things as human activities, surroundings and situations, for, though not actually made by God, they could not have existed without His concurrence. I have, there-

fore, to admit that everything that is not God is, directly or indirectly, one of His creatures.

Consequently: if all these creatures, like myself, came from God they belong to Him as I do; and He has the right to dispose of them as seems good to Him; while I cannot do so without usurping a right that is not mine.

In the parlance of the world: "an owner can do as he pleases with what belongs to him." He has no such right in the eyes of God, before whom he is but a user or tenant. The prodigal son said to his father: *Give me the portion of substance that falleth to me.* (Luke xv. 12.) I cannot say the same to my heavenly Father, for nothing is due to me.

Persons do not belong to me; and I rob Almighty God if I cause them to serve solely as a means to my own profit or advancement. This holds equally good in the use of material things for nothing but my own comfort or vainglory; while the same is true when, among the human activities in which I engage, I only seek my own interest or pleasure. In short: all belong to God; and if I appropriate or use them for my own benefit only I am defrauding Him.

Further and very really: I am guilty of misuse when I divert any creature from its legitimate end in order to minister to my own vain desires. Had it but the will and the power it would avenge itself and God: in any event it will bear witness against me at the Day of Judgment.

It thus appears that there is no exception or limit to the rights of the Creator over His own world—everything belongs to Him and nothing to me. This being the absolute truth, I have no more to do than bow before, and conform my conduct to it. If I act as becomes my state, I shall live like a son of the house—discreetly using the household goods, and that only with the parental sanction. For, being what I am and

living where I do, I am but dwelling in my Father's house in very truth.

II.—Since all the creatures mentioned above came from God they belong to Him ; but what are they here *for* ? Evidently for God, as their mediate and supreme object. He can no more relinquish His rights over them than over myself. But each and every one of them has an immediate and subordinate object—me. When I deal with one of them or it deals with me, it is by God's permission that such should happen. He wishes nothing but my good, and therefore wills that the creature of the moment should serve me. To Him the glory, to me the benefit.

So I can say without exaggeration that every creature has been created and placed where it is for me—the Church triumphant in heaven, the Church militant here on earth with her doctrine and sacraments (*sacramenta propter homines*), even the Sacred Humanity of our divine Lord (*this day is born* to you *a Saviour* (Luke ii. 11.), the world and all I see and know in it. (*Behold I have given* you *every herb.* (Gen. i. 29.) Everything was created for man and therefore for me.

But though these creatures are for me, there is a limitation : they may not be used for *any* end, at my will and pleasure ; but only in so far as they serve one : the salvation of my soul. This is evident. I have only one duty because I have only one end ; and everything else should seem to me as it does to God : to be nothing more than the means of attaining that end by being the instrument for the performance of my one duty. For example : persons help me to attain the end for which alone I was created when they tell me of my faults, but hinder me when they minister to my self-love by flattery ; food is used for a legitimate purpose when I eat that I may live, but not when I only live in order to eat—gormandize, in fact. In like manner, occupa-

tions are profitable when engaged in for the glory of God, but altogether unprofitable when undertaken for the glorification of self or to gratify natural taste. There are two uses to which I may put situations in which I am placed, *e.g.*, poverty and sickness. I may look upon them as trials sent by God for my good—even as blessings ; or I may regard them as undeserved misfortunes, to be murmured at or rebelled against unceasingly.

Then these creatures are for one end here on earth and for no other : to assist me to do my duty to Almighty God. Once more then, let me ask Him to give me the grace of a firmer grasp of this truth, and for courage to put it into practice better than I have done hitherto.

III.—Creatures, being only a means, ought to be regarded and used as such—neither more nor less. Consequently, I ought to use the many and varied things in the world around me exclusively to promote the great object I have in view : the glory of God and my own salvation.

Against this poor human nature often rebels. A course of action is proposed ; it pleases me, I resolve to put it into execution and strive untiringly to accomplish it successfully. On the other hand, it fails to commend itself to me ; I resolve to have nothing to do with it and avoid it by every means in my power. Neither of these alternatives—liking or dislike—is to the point. For, while nature impels me to *live* (*i.e.*, enjoy) my life, faith and reason warn me to *use* it—and for my great object only.

Moreover : Not only have I to use these creatures for that purpose, but I have to use them exclusively for it, *i.e.* as far as they are necessary to it, but no farther. Hence arises the need of prudence, temperance, sometimes even of restraint. All of which imply a certain amount of continual and universal mortification. And

he who thus makes use of creatures is master of himself and all his inordinate affections.

But you say : If I regard the things of this life solely as a means of gaining life eternal ; what is this but practically to withdraw myself from men and things in despair ? In the first place, this is to regard the wholly exceptional asceticism of the anchorites and such-like as the general standard for all. Secondly, even the Christian, the anchorite and the saint can take his part in the affairs of the world he is hypothetically assumed to eschew, at least by means of contemplation. And he can—indeed he sometimes ought to—take an active part, under his obligation of raising such things to a higher plane.

Then, as to persons : Is there not something unworthy in this idea that I should exploit them instead of devoting myself to them ? What is this but to use my nearest and dearest as a ladder by which I am to ascend to heaven ? Thus do they argue who stigmatize Christianity as nothing more than colossal selfishness. In reality, the best way of " using " these persons is to serve them, to sacrifice everything but God and my own salvation for them. And the best service I can render them is to love them as I ought to love them : for God, their eternal salvation and my own—not for my own satisfaction, under the specious pretext of devotion to them.

Again : How am I to determine where the service of God ends and worldliness begins ? Am I (so to speak) to go through life with the scales always on the table before me ? By no means. God does not wish to be served *with sadness or of necessity*. (2 Cor. ix. 7.) Wherefore : Given the habitual intention of serving God rightly in my relations with His creatures, my own conscience will warn me when these relations threaten to become inordinate.

COLLOQUY with my Creator and Lord; acknowledging the truth concerning His creatures and His designs both for them and for myself, lamenting that human nature ever draws me to use them for my own ends, and once more asking for courage to overcome myself for love of Him.

IV

Indifference of Will in regard to Creatures

The only spiritual value of creatures to me is their bearing on my last end. In some cases this is evidently good or bad, *e.g.*, the Church, on the one hand, and a proximate occasion of sin, on the other. Between these extremes are numberless other creatures which, of two themselves, have no necessary bearing on my last end, but may have one accidentally, *e.g.*, such as a course of studies, employment, etc. So long as God, by the circumstances in which He has placed or permitted me to be, has not made the bearing of these creatures on my last end plain, they are neutral as far as I am concerned ; and I ought to be equally prepared to use them or not to use them. St. Ignatius calls this disposition of will Indifference—a term here synonymous with detachment. We have then to meditate on the absolute necessity of this Indifference, meet objections and consider its true nature and advantages.

Therefore I will ask Almighty God to give me a clear understanding of the disposition of will that ought to be mine, and courage to act upon it.

I.—This habitual Indifference of will in regard to creatures is a logical and rational necessity. Logical and rational : because my last end alone being of primary importance, the importance of everything else depends on its relation to that ; while, if it has none, it is unimportant. Consequently I should err if I wilfully entertained either sympathy or antipathy towards it.

A necessity: our actions depend on our habitual intentions towards them. In practice, action generally falls short of intention, but hardly ever exceeds it—especially where an effort of courage is required. To save my soul it is absolutely necessary to glorify God. To do that I must habitually make use of creatures in the sole interest of my last end, and have therefore to keep my will free as far as they are concerned, *i.e.*, maintain a habitual Indifference of will towards them; and this Indifference is the normal condition of using them as they ought to be used.

To serve God and attain my last end I must so dispose myself as never to act from inordinate affection, which I cannot do if I wilfully entertain a single one. Besides, he who abandons Indifference towards one creature verges on inordinate affection for it. He likes or dislikes the creature for itself without regard to his last end. Therefore, if I do not make myself indifferent I live in continual danger of acting from inordinate affection, failing in my duty to God and compromising my eternal salvation.

Examples: a particular kind of study, employment, and so on. Supposing I entertain a voluntary affection for one of them. What will happen if, some day, obedience or emergency—the will of God manifested to me by circumstances—refuse me what I want or enjoin me to abandon it? Similarly, a voluntary repugnance? In practice, sacrifice or resignation are not born suddenly; and I jeopardize all if I do not maintain that habitual Indifference which is necessary for my right use of creatures and therefore for the service of God and my own salvation.

This Indifference must extend to everything. *No man can serve two masters.* (Matt. vi. 24.) And to keep everything for God but one—and that one for itself (really for *myself*)—is, in effect, to try to do this. To willingly cherish a single desire or repugnance is to

listen to nature and forget the last end, to foment an inordinate affection that may eventuate in grave sin and terminate in eternal ruin—just as an imprudence may lead to an illness, the end of which is death. There is no security except in Indifference to every creature without exception.

Thus far the principle: we may now consider Indifference in practice:—

Health or sickness. The first consists not only in being well, but in the satisfaction of feeling strong, active, and useful. And sickness—a lasting one? Together with the suffering there is inaction, powerlessness, the feeling of being a useless burden. No matter: each, in itself, is indifferent to my last end; and I should not wish for one more than the other.

A long life or a short one. A long life: a work completed, a career established, a mark made, perhaps. An early death: promise unfulfilled, hopes blighted—failure, humanly speaking. Again no matter. My salvation can be worked out as easily by one as by the other; and I ought to be prepared to accept either of them willingly.

The same holds good of riches or poverty. I can save my soul in either condition. The situations being indifferent, I must make myself indifferent too.

Honour or dishonour. General appreciation, an assured position in human estimation, which constitute honour; while dishonour may range from great humiliations to mediocrity and obscurity—a great difference according to nature, but equal Indifference as regards the last end. We may hazard that our last end can be better assured by poverty and dishonour than by honour and riches. But at least let us be indifferent.

And in general: occupation, residence, companions, in the public eye or unheard of—since they are indifferent in themselves, I ought to be indifferent to them.

This Indifference is not a matter of nature and feelings

but of my will and last end; without it no hope of perfection, possibly some danger to my salvation.

II.—It is the constant endeavour of the devil to persuade us that Indifference is something either purely negative or repellent. Consequently we may first lay down what it is *not* :—

It is not stolid indifference due to imperfect appreciation of men and things, or satiety with them. Nor is it the egoistical calculation of one willing to enjoy life if he does not pay too dearly for it. Neither is it illusion as to the true nature of things—pain is still pain and happiness happiness. It is not the reaction of disappointed vanity. Still less is it insensibility to, or the death of natural impressions—Indifference of will can co-exist with the most vivid counter-impressions, *e.g.*, the Agony in the Garden. In short: nature and the devil depict Indifference as an extinction of desires and natural affections—a heart either empty or dead. If this be so, what is to be thought of the Sacred Heart or the heart of the saints?

Indifference is the contrary of all these. It implies a heart consumed by a love which excludes incompatible affections and subordinates all others—it is, in fact, a preference for God above and before all things else. How can I become indifferent to persons if God is not more to me than all of them; if I do not at least try to put in practice those words of our Lord: *He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me*? (Matt. x. 37.) How can I say, with any sincerity: *Besides thee what do I desire upon earth?* (Ps. lxxii. 25), if it is not my constant endeavour to become indifferent to material things? And, in regard to intellectual pursuits, I cannot become really indifferent unless I esteem the better knowledge of God as the only really profitable one for me. And it is only when I become really indifferent that I can accept

situations, employment, surroundings, success, failure, health, sickness, life or death—as means whereby I may love the holy will of God above all things and say with our divine Lord : *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work.* (John iv. 34.)

To establish ourselves in habitual Indifference is to establish ourselves in the habitual desire to love God *more* than all creatures. *More,* for we are nowhere enjoined not to love them at all ; but we must not love them for themselves, nor for our own satisfaction—we must love all in God and God in them, according to His divine will. In practice, the love of God only eliminates incompatible affections (lust, covetousness, etc.) or those that compete with it—such as excessive love of family or undue devotion to temporal affairs. Beyond that, it conserves, elevates and consecrates all natural affections by rendering them subservient to itself.

A better understanding of this Indifference will cause us to better appreciate its advantages. It elevates us to the highest degree of independence possible for a creature—he who is indifferent only needs God. It guarantees our freedom of action, not only in our own efforts to attain perfection, but also in those for the good of others. It alone makes a man sincere, upright and consistent—at peace with himself, and therefore content with his state. Experience of the contrary will easily convince us of this : *Why art thou sad, O my soul ? and why dost thou disquiet me ?* (Ps. xlii. 5.) It is the germ of numberless virtues, since it calls for the exercise of obedience, resignation, conformity to the divine will, docility, meekness, and so on, when they are required. Nor is this remarkable, since it is detachment and self-abnegation.

Moreover : though it is God alone who can implant the germs of love for Himself in the heart, it is only the practice of Indifference that can cause it to grow

and bring forth fruit. The two act and react on one another in the same manner as do life and food—to be able to eat at all we must live, but to preserve life and strengthen it we must eat.

Then do we love God as we should or even as much as we desire to do? If not, why not? Because we love something else too well—our own comfort, opinions, vanity, independence, and things connected with them. That is, we entertain, more or less knowingly and willingly, some inordinate affection—we are not sufficiently indifferent in fact. And henceforth? We can progress in the love of God if we are prepared to pay the price. That price is the surrender of the inordinate affection or affections—again Indifference. The man who discovered treasure in the field sold all he had to be able to buy the field and the consequent right to the treasure. (Matt. xiii. 44.) And should not I, in order to obtain the priceless treasure of the love of God, be ready to surrender—and with a light heart—all creatures and the pitiful satisfaction to be derived from them? To love God with all our heart we must become indifferent to creatures. And His love is worth everything else besides.

Three practical rules to aid us to Indifference :—

First and most important : Never decide upon a course of action under the influence of an inordinate affection.

If conscious of such an affection, do not foment it by voluntary complacency, recollection, or imagination—what imprudence to entertain a rival to God in the heart!

Strive to exert every energy to arrive at the contrary of the inordinate affection ; renounce it inwardly, work against it, go even beyond what is necessary and pray for help to be enabled to do so.

And at this price we can purchase the habit of Indifference, together with progress in the love of God.

COLLOQUY.—Let us renew our Act of Charity: O Lord my God, I love Thee with my whole heart, and above all things . . . adding: Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given it to me; to Thee, O Lord, I restore it—all is Thine, dispose of it according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is enough for me.

V

FIRST WEEK

The Triple Sin

Thus far we have considered Order—what man should do to attain the end for which he was created. We have now to consider Disorder—what man has in fact done by disregard of his last end: by sin. And first of all we may see from its effects how God looks upon sin.

First Prelude.—To think of my soul confined in this corruptible body as in a prison: *the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things* (Wisd. ix. 15), and my whole self as it were in exile among brute beasts. Superior to them by reason, I can descend to their level by corporeal appetites, and my very intelligence can serve to debase me to a greater degree than their instinct.

Second Prelude.—I will ask for shame and confusion at myself; seeing how many have been lost for one mortal sin, and how many times I have merited to be lost eternally for my so many sins.

I.—The punishment of the rebel angels is the first authentic record we have of the retribution exacted by Almighty God for sin. The angels were the first masterpieces of His creative power—pure spirits, beings of intellect and will, created in grace. Their destiny

was, like my own, heaven for all eternity—a destiny beyond the exigencies and natural aptitudes of even a spiritual creature, and one as purely gratuitous for them as for myself.

Being free, it was fitting that the angels should undergo some probation before attaining to their final destiny. According to tradition, this probation consisted in a revelation of the Incarnation and a command to adore the Sacred Humanity. But whatever the object of their sin may have been, the sin itself must have been one of pride—the only sin possible for a spiritual nature. Fascinated with their own excellence, they would oppose their own intellect and will to those of God: *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, . . . thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven. . . . I will be like the most High.* (Isa. xiv. 12–14.)

And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. (Apoc. xii. 7–8.) Their punishment was as swift as their revolt: *I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven,* said our Lord. (Luke x. 18.)

More than this, God has passed from love to hatred in their regard; while their spiritual nature, though not lessened, has changed from good to evil. The fallen angel has become *the wicked one* (1 John ii. 13), *a liar, and the father thereof* (John viii. 44); he who has no body such as encumbers us becomes *the unclean spirit* (Matt. xii. 43.) And in that instant hell is created—the *everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. xxv. 41)—into which they are whelmed for ever without possibility of repentance and with no hope of redemption.

Such being the facts, reflection shows us clearly that the sin of the rebel angels was enormous in itself: a refusal of reverence and obedience to their Creator,

aggravated by the consideration that the transcendence of their knowledge showed them their true relation to Him. Being free they could have conformed to the divine will; wherefore the fault was entirely their own. Furthermore: if the object of their probation was the future Incarnation, if their fault was to disown and reject Jesus Christ in advance, it is only too just that they should benefit nothing by the Redemption, and be condemned to be for ever *without Christ* (Eph. ii. 12), and consequently without hope of reconciliation.

We compare the sin and the chastisement. An instant of voluntary self-complacency, a movement of pride consented to and—an eternity of torment from which no issue is possible. And yet it must be just, for *Thou art just, O Lord: and thy judgment is right.* (Ps. cxviii. 137.) If this disconcerts us, is it wonderful? Can we pretend to understand the justice of God? That would be to understand God Himself—an impossibility even with the aid of faith. Rather, let us adore and say: *How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways.* (Rom. xi. 33.) Meanwhile we may draw this manifest conclusion: that between God and sin there must be an infinite incompatibility; since sin shows this Nature, infinitely peaceable, good and loving, turned entirely to hatred, and causes It to reject and cast out the sinner.

Now, to compare the condition of the rebel angels with my own. For them a single sin and that one irreparable; for me many sins and reparation always possible up to the hour of my death. For them no Jesus Christ; for me Jesus Christ always at my service, His Blood ever ready *for the washing of the sinner.* (Zach. xiii. 1.) An Act of sincere Contrition, a few steps to take, a few words to say—and I am reconciled! I can appreciate the wrath of a poor man who sees the rich waste in follies money that would support ten families like his own; but I understand still better the rage of Satan

when he contemplates my confessions. But my understanding fails me altogether when I think of the prodigality of God's mercies in my regard and the parsimony employed towards him; the daily, and more than daily, facilities that I have to return to grace, and the impossibility of his ever doing so, now that he has taken the first step. So much leniency on one side, such rigour on the other! Why? The mercy of God is as incomprehensible as His justice: *as it hath pleased the Lord so it is done. Blessed be the name of the Lord.* (Job i. 21.)

Then, seeing how Almighty God dealt with that first sin, what shame and confusion should be mine! Shame, even before the devil who only sinned once; whereas I have offended often and been so easily forgiven. But how much more should I burn with confusion before God for the abuse I have made of His mercy! My confessions: carelessly made perhaps, and still more carelessly prepared; quite possibly, advantage taken of pardon always offered to live in a state of habitual venial sin!

And gratitude! It is only by *the mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed* (Thren. iii. 22)—consumed by the divine wrath which overtook the rebel angels. And this, in itself, should suffice in future to deter me from treating with heedlessness the sovereign Goodness that is ever ready to pardon.

II.—And how did God deal with the first human sinner, Adam, my ancestor? His nature: my own—at once corporeal and spiritual, *a little lower than the angels* (Heb. ii. 7)—with the additional privilege that, in time to come, the Word will share his and not the angelic nature.

His destiny: the intuitive vision of God, as in the case of the angels. And until he attain to that, he has grace, both habitual and actual.

His accessory privileges: integrity, knowledge, a delightful sojourn in a terrestrial paradise whence, without suffering or death, he would pass to a state more delightful still in the celestial paradise.

Did God love this second creature and do sufficient for him?

Now comes the trial—a trial imposed in order that he may contribute in some measure to his own eventual beatitude. It is in the form of a temptation: *Ye shall be as Gods* (Gen. iii. 5)—proposed by him who, in time past, had said on his own behalf: *I will be like the most High.* (Isa. xiv. 14.) He had been the first to be taken in this snare; in it he would take man.

The Fall accomplished, chastisement ensues. Death of the soul: loss of original justice and sanctity in this life; heaven exchanged for hell in the next. Death of the body, in fulfilment of the divine menace: *In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.* (Gen. ii. 17.) Man has braved his Maker; he must labour, suffer, and finally return to the earth from which he was taken. (Gen. iii. 19.) In short, his supernatural destiny was virtually destroyed; it would have been irremediably so but for Jesus Christ. With it vanished his glorious adjuncts—knowledge and exemption from suffering—and even Christ Himself would not restore them. And integrity having been withdrawn, concupiscence—the revolt of the flesh against the spirit—takes its place. Having rebelled against God, man lives in a state of rebellion against himself; while creation—hitherto submissive and friendly—rebels against him. Henceforth a ceaseless struggle with the elements, the brute creation, with the very soil, now cursed in man's work. (Gen. iii. 17.)

We consider the personal life of Adam, the first human sinner. Nine centuries of penance, the spectacle of the murder of Abel—first appearance of death upon

earth—as well as that of the crimes committed by his immediate posterity—all born of his own.

More terrible still is the hereditary character of the penalty: all men morally contained in the first one, sinners in him, punishable and punished on his account —the universal and inevitable law for the human race, save Mary by grace, and the Sacred Humanity by personal necessity. And all the actual sins committed throughout the centuries since, which make the history of mankind a record of lust, rapine and bloodshed! Each one was free, no doubt; *it must needs be that scandals come* (Matt. xviii. 7); but the torch of desire being enkindled, it could not but be that the flames of action should result. And in seeing and foreseeing this, and knowing himself to be the first author of this desire, Adam found part of his chastisement.

Now we may reflect upon the apparent disproportion between the material object of the offence and the retribution exacted. A single fruit plucked: the entire human race debarred from heaven! But it was plucked in disobedience—and to whom?—while the trifling nature of the deprivation rendered that disobedience more inexcusable. Nor is it for us to essay to justify the divine severity; ours to confess the mystery and, bowing before it, once again tremble at the hatred of God for sin—the more so as we feel the effects of original sin in the ignoble desires that lie hidden within us.

III.—The last step in our meditation will be to conceive two hypotheses: the first, that of a man lost on account of a single mortal sin; the second, that of many men lost perhaps for fewer sins than my own—in any case, after a lesser abuse of grace than that of which I myself have been guilty.

I examine the first case—not in a spirit of criticism; but that, having more light, I may adore the justice of Almighty God. One lost for a single mortal sin! To

begin with, it is nothing new, for it happened to the rebel angels. Again, nothing contrary to justice. Every mortal sin consists in this : that the creature knowingly and willingly prefers his own will to that of his Creator ; and he who commits one understands perfectly that nothing more is needed to ensure his eternal ruin—it is, in effect, a challenge to the divine justice. Can he complain if God accepts it ? Can I complain that God should make my eternity depend on the act of an instant, on a single false step taken by poor human nature, so feeble and so hard pressed ? That would be to misconceive, not only the divine sanctity, but also the divine love and mercy—to forget that the Passion and Death of Christ were brought about by the very evil I am considering. If my reason can no more comprehend the divine justice than the divine love, let it at least show me this : Almighty God, all goodness, all love—witness Jesus Christ, whom we shall meditate upon later—has decided that hell is not too much for a single mortal sin. There must necessarily, then, be an opposition between Him and mortal sin—an incompatibility as infinite as Himself. Consequently, there remains nothing for me but to say : I believe.

As to the other hypothesis. Perhaps—probably even —some men, men without number, are in hell for fewer sins than mine. More probably still, they are there after having received less graces than myself. Why this inequality in my favour ? Why this prolonged patience of God with me, when it has lapsed sooner in the case of others ? Lord, Lord, penetrate me with gratitude and shame ! I have had to blush before Satan himself ; now I must blush before these unhappy unknown who are in hell without having deserved it as much as myself. And how much more before Thee, my God, so good, so loving ; and before Jesus Christ whom Thou hast delivered up for me !

VI

Mortal Sin

Who can understand sins? (Ps. xviii. 13.) We have great need to understand the malice of sin; but to do so would be to understand the sanctity of God. The most that is possible for us is to call to mind His recorded dealings with sinners, and thence draw the conclusion as to how we should regard sin.

I.—To this end, we may once more reflect upon the fall of the rebel angels, and also that of our First Parents, as set forth at length in the preceding meditation—not in order to reason about them, but rather to accept the facts, adore the divine justice, and conceive a salutary fear of the judgments of God.

II.—But, should we halt there, we may be tempted to think of God as not only swift but perhaps even eager to punish. So, in order to correct this impression, we will take two incidents from Holy Scripture, and meditate upon them with the same insistence as upon the other two:—

The first is the dialogue of Abraham with God concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, as related in Genesis xviii. God gave Abraham the opportunity of pleading for the doomed cities: *Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?* . . . And Abraham said: *Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked?* . . . And the Lord said to him: *If I find fifty . . . five and forty . . . thirty . . . twenty . . . ten just*

within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.

Still more to the purpose is the mission of Jonas to Ninive, his prophecy concerning the judgment about to fall on that city, the fulfilment of which was averted by the timely repentance of the inhabitants; his murmurings at the divine clemency and the lessons he received. This illustrates, as nothing else could, the hard and vindictive narrowness of the heart of man as contrasted with the all-embracing mercifulness of the Heart of God—only too happy not to be compelled to strike and destroy, and even mindful of the *many beasts* that would have perished in the catastrophe. (Jonas iv. 11.)

From this it is evident that the divine inclination is not to punish, but rather to spare. But then: confronted with these two apparent contradictions, where are we and what are we to think? We are in our true place, where we always have been, where we always shall be; between the two mysteries of justice and love—two mysteries in one: God Himself, as infinite and incomprehensible in one attribute as in the other. But one conclusion is forced upon us: What an evil must sin be when it compels God, so reluctant to punish, to punish it with such severity! And that is sufficient for me to know.

III.—And yet, if we would seek some reconciliation between these two mysteries of the divine justice and love, we can find it on Calvary. For, in Jesus Christ is said the last word, both of the hatred of God for sin and of His love and mercy for the sinner—for me.

So we regard our divine Lord on the Cross, as the prophetic vision of Isaias portrayed Him: *There is no beauty in him . . . and no sightliness that we should be desirous of him . . . wounded for our iniquities, bruised for our sins . . . as it were a leper and as one*

struck by God . . . despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity . . . whereupon we esteemed him not . . . led as a sheep to the slaughter and dumb as a lamb before his shearer. (Isa. liii. 2–7.) He died, not only broken in body but also in His human heart; in His heart of a son—for the suffering of His Mother added a new torment; in His heart of friend, benefactor, apostle—*Then he* (Peter) *began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man* (Matt. xxvi. 74); *then the disciples all leaving him, fled* (56.); in His heart even of the Holy One and the Just, *whom you denied and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.* (Acts iii. 14.) What sorrow was wanting to Him?

And why? First of all, how came it about that the coeternal Son of the Father became Man? And then, having become Man, what caused Him to die—and such a death?

The answer is found in the words of the Apostle: *He that spared not even his own Son.* (Rom. viii. 32.) As St. Paul wrote them they speak only of goodness and mercy. As applied to our Lord Himself they tell of the divine justice also.

He that spared not even his own Son; and now it is our Lord Himself who addresses us from His Cross:—Adore the justice of My Father. Yes, I have not ceased to be His well beloved, only begotten Son. But it has pleased Him to lay upon Me the guilt of thy sin: *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Isa. liii. 6.) From that moment I became thyself and all sinners, the incarnation of sin: *Him, who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us.* (2 Cor. v. 21.)

Thenceforth nothing further was necessary to cause Me to be treated as you see. Now do you begin to understand the horror of My Father for sin? What are all other examples by comparison—angels ruined for a flash of pride, humanity entire lost for the sin of Adam, the deluge, fire from heaven on the Cities of the

Plain, hell for a single mortal sin ? Was I not of more value in the eyes of My Father than all angels, souls, the whole universe ? And He has not spared Me—I, who have only the appearance of sin. Behold how He detests sin ! In My Passion and Death I was the highest and most terrible expression of this detestation.

On the other hand, but just as really, what could I say, and what could He to whom all things are possible do, to make thee conceive His love for the sinner—for thee ? Offended, the Father willed that the reparation should be infinite and, from that moment, neither angel nor man could make it : *And I sought among them for a man that might set up a hedge and stand in the gap before me in favour of the land, that I might not destroy it : and I found none.* (Ezek. xxii. 30.) Not finding him in creation, We made Ourself this Redeemer : a Man inferior to God and thus capable of suffering and expiation ; equal to God, God Himself, and therefore able to attach an infinite value to expiatory suffering. I, the Word, said to the Father : *Behold I come* (Ps. xxxix. 8), and the Father has *fitted to me a body* (Heb. x. 5), the soul of a man, to become a ransom for man—for thee. My Father has loved the guilty world, He has loved thee, sinner, so greatly as to deliver Me in thy place—I, the Just, My Humanity created expressly for the sacrifice : *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son.* (John iii. 16.) And I, in My heart of man, have so loved thee, as to ratify the exchange and deliver myself spontaneously for thee : *He was offered because it was his own will.* (Isa. liii. 7). Could the Father do more to prove His love than sacrifice Me for thee ? To prove My own could I do more than die to save thee ? *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* (John xv. 13.) My Father and I can both say : *What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it ?* (Isa. v. 4.)

So speaks our divine Lord from His Cross. In my turn, I interrogate myself. What terror should I feel before the dread justice of God! *If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?* (Luke xxiii. 31.) And what shame also! Could I look on unmoved while another suffered for a crime I committed myself? And what happened on Calvary? I have blushed before a reprobate less guilty than myself, but what self-abasement should be mine when I regard Him who died on the Cross for me—the Cross on which I ought to be myself, *for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice.* (Matt. iii. 15.)

Again I ask myself: What have I done up to now? What have I done for Jesus Christ dying for me? But first of all: what have I done against Him? What do I do every day? Even if I am only guilty of small faults, they are lightly committed! And the reparation? I recommend devotion to the Sacred Heart, as eminently suitable for others; what am I doing on my own behalf? And even at this very moment: how earnest is the endeavour I am making to understand the mystery of the divine justice and love more clearly?

And for the future — the future that commences to-day and will recommence every day up to my last—what ought I to do? what shall I do? Continue with deplorable heedlessness to offend Him whom I have regarded dying for me? Is this retreat to pass lightly over my soul and leave it slothful—indifferent perhaps? No, Lord Jesus, grant that it may not be so with me!

VII

My Own Sins

For those who make a retreat every year it seems more practical to review the sins of the past year only. If, by the grace of God, they were but venial, the considerations of St. Ignatius apply just as forcibly. But each one is free to examine further into his past—provided he has received no direction to the contrary.

First Prelude (the matter of the meditation).—I recall the sins of the past year—not necessarily all, but the principal ones—especially those that appear in every confession. Taken singly, they may not seem to amount to much; but regarded as a whole, they show the habits I have formed—perhaps my indolence and spiritual stagnation. I note any special circumstance and its results as far as I know them. Thus far the memory.

Second Prelude.—I will ask for vehement sorrow and even tears—tears of the heart and will, that is essential; tears of the eyes if it please God to grant them—and certainly there is matter for weeping!

I.—I consider my habitual sins as they are in themselves, without regard to prohibition or penalty.

My direct relations with God: my spiritual duties. Too often negligence, sloth, irreverence, perhaps lack of interest and voluntary disgust. All these signify forgetfulness of God's position and my own—ingratitude

in any case. *Therefore be thou also confounded and bear thy shame.* (Ezek. xvi. 52.)

My habitual relations with my neighbour. Positive faults by word or deed; damage to his reputation, resentment, secret contempt, and so on. Negatively or by omission: refusal to help, want of interest in what is not personal to myself—the egoism of one who would live by himself for himself and sacrifice others instead of sacrificing himself for them. Not habitually perhaps, but certainly every time I offend against my neighbour. *Therefore be thou . . .*

My habitual relations with myself—whether I exercise self-control or let nature have its way. Am I free from sensuality or self-love? Sensuality, in my love of ease or dependence on material things—a hindrance to the liberty and dignity of my soul. Self-love in its many forms: over-sensitiveness, jealousy, self-assertion, boasting direct or indirect, tenacity of my own opinion, foolish vanity which I—so quick to detect or imagine in others—do not perceive in myself. *Therefore be thou . . .*

What confusion would be mine if, here and now, God should show me to the world such as my sins have made me! Better forestall the future revelation by timely avowal and amendment now. And let me not mince matters!

II.—My sins have done me little credit and besides, worse than that, they have done injury to God. Every deliberate sin, be it mortal or venial, implies that I have preferred myself to Him. Practically I have said, with Lucifer, *I will be like the most High* (Isa. xiv. 14); and, like him, placed myself above the Almighty, in placing my own will and pleasure before His. Even in deliberate venial sin this was so; for my conscience told me plainly what the divine will was and I refused to hearken.

We compare the two: God and myself—He the

offended, I the offender. *The whole world before thee is as the least grain of the balance and as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth.* (Wisd. xi. 23.) If all the world is but an atom before God, then I must be merely an atom of this atom. And though He has endowed this atom with understanding and free-will, it still remains nothing. Nevertheless it prefers itself to God—twenty times a day perhaps !

God and myself. He, a pure spirit, infinitely good, great and powerful. I, a poor soul imprisoned in *the body of this death* (Rom. vii. 24), which sometimes I even prefer to God—offending Him to gratify it !

God, the infinite intelligence, the source of all truth and light. I, a being of limited reason, ignorant, vacillating, not seldom mistaken. And I am proud of myself, defend my own opinions at the expense of charity, and, on occasions, arrogantly oppose those who instruct or command me in the name of God. In short, I oppose my reason to the wisdom of God.

God, the sovereign will, whom none can resist : *He spoke and they were made : he commanded and they were created.* (Ps. xxxii. 9.) And I ? Unstable of purpose, swayed by my feelings, feeble in face of resistance, and only to be roused with effort. And it is this miserable will of mine that would dare the Almighty. For, in the least of my faults is there not an opposition, more or less voluntary, to the will of God—a preference for my own ?

God, righteousness, purity, holiness itself ; from whom nothing can emanate that is not as He is. On the other hand, myself who, by original lusts but more than all by my sinful habits, become a fire, a source of deformity and wretchedness, an envenomed wound suppurating evil : *wounds and swelling sores.* (Isa. i. 6.) And when I sin, even venially, what misfortune is mine ; for I prefer to the all-holy God that sink of misery and corruption which constitutes " myself."

One last contrast—not between the infinite greatness of the Offended and the nothingness of the offender, but between their reciprocal conduct. God, sufficient for Himself—whose happiness is in nowise augmented by mine, and would lose nothing were I lost eternally—behaves as though my salvation would be His consolation and my ruin His despair. And, that I may share His beatitude in spite of the divine justice, He gives and sacrifices Jesus Christ for me. And I who live in entire dependence on Him, how do I conduct myself? My sinful habits answer for me. And though I have not the temerity to renounce Him altogether, I have not courage enough to ensure my eventual possession of Him by a more severe purity of conscience, by self-denial and restraint—for every venial sin implies defect of one of these.

And what if I have sinned mortally in the past, *i.e.* repulsed the hand that sustained me? In effect, I said to the divine Goodness: "Let me alone; I have no need of you." And, in like manner, by venial sin: "You ask too much for your benefits; I have no such need of you that I should forgo my ease and pleasure for your gratification."

Lastly: Jesus Christ become Man and suffering for me—lavishing His love and His Blood to gain my heart. And this miserable heart, giving itself in principle but grudging and bargaining over details, says: "No, your love and your Blood are not worth so much sacrifice." I am ashamed of my blindness, but what about my ingratitude? Can I not find in this last consideration material for the intense sorrow and tears that St. Ignatius asks as the fruit of this meditation?

III.—St. Ignatius asks from me an expression of intense sorrow for my sins, mingled with astonishment. How comes it that all creation has not risen against me to avenge their offended Creator? *And the whole world*

shall fight with him against the unwise. (Wisd. v. 21.) It is quite possible that, if there has been mortal sin in my past, it may cost me an effort to enter into the spirit of this last consideration. If that be so, let me reflect that it was the view the saints took of grave sin, and ask which is the more likely to be correct, they or I ?

Even though there was no more than venial sin in my last year, this consideration still holds good. For, though I am not astonished that hell has not engulfed me, I may ask myself why our Lord still tolerates me as a Catholic at all, or leaves me my vocation if I am a priest or religious, in view of my deplorable facility for venial sin. *Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out.* (Apoc. iii. 16.) Am I fervent or tepid—which ? May not my proclivity for venial sin provoke what St. Ignatius terms the " disgust" of his divine Majesty for me ?

Again : St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians : *Temptation hath not come upon you but such as man can bear.* (1 Cor. x. 13. Westm. Version.) That is to say, ordinary temptations incident to man, those to overcome which ordinary means and ordinary graces suffice. But, besides these, there are extraordinary temptations —violent and extreme ones, in which a moment may decide the fate of a vocation, perhaps even of a soul. Against such is no protection save God who *is faithful and will not suffer you to be tempted beyond your strength.* And this protection I have not only to ask, but also endeavour to deserve by my own conduct. Why then, up to this moment, has God not suffered me to be confronted with some such formidable trial before which I should, in all probability, have succumbed ? Is it due to any merit of my own ? Am I among those who *watch and pray* as they should do, lest they *enter into temptation ?* (Matt. xxvi. 41.) Again : a man can always prepare, as far as is given to human nature to do so, for these great trials, which are always possible,

by the habit of resistance and conquest in the ordinary trials of each day. Is this habit mine, or the contrary ? My sins answer that. By themselves they draw down upon me formidable temptations, against which they disarm me at the same time. And, if I do not force myself to break with them, if I do not speedily shake off that lamentable indifference which perhaps they leave in the soul, where is the moral guarantee of my perseverance and my future ?

Colloquy.—Ah ! I, at least, have no difficulty in entering into the spirit of the colloquy ; to bless you, O my God, for the time you still leave me ; to conceive a firm purpose of using it well, and not to offend you henceforth, with such reprehensible thoughtlessness and crying ingratitude. Too much—alas !—do I resemble the barren fig tree. There have been many more than three years in which I have produced little or no fruit, and given you abundant cause to pronounce the fatal decree : *Cut it down therefore. Why cumbereth it the ground ?* (Luke xiii. 7.) Jesus Christ now deigns to reply : *Let it alone this year also.* (8.) And how shall I dare to say that this year following the retreat will not be the last effort of your patience and longanimity in my regard ? Grant me then the grace to open my eyes, to repent, to resolve better things.

VIII

Death

Although death is the only event in our career about which we can be absolutely certain, there is, for the most part, very little serious thought bestowed upon it. In fact, nothing is more noticeable than the general conspiracy of silence on the matter. Plenty of time yet! we say. And this, when we *know not the day nor the hour.* (Matt. xxv. 13.) 'Twere best to consider it now, lest death take us unawares: *What I say to you, I say to all: Watch.* (Mark xiii. 37.)

First Prelude.—The scene: My usual room in my usual house. Better still: the place in which I have seen some one else die—provided I can imagine myself in their place

Second Prelude.—I will ask two graces: that I may die as I ought to die; and that I may live in the state in which I should wish death to find me.

I.—Death is the great departure—a migration to that far country whence is no return. It is no question of going forth *out of thy country and from thy kindred* (Gen. xii. 1), but of a journey to a region where *the fashion of this world passeth away.* (1 Cor. vii. 31.) And as the Church pronounces the words: *Depart, O Christian soul, out of this sinful world,* earth and creatures seem to fade away: I am leaving them all. *Doth bitter death separate in this manner?* (1 Kings xv. 32.) Yes: farewell to all!

Farewell to things—and happy shall I be if I possess few of them! To my position and influence: I shall hardly be missed and soon forgotten—and unless my friends pray for me, to what purpose remembrance? Farewell to my activities—for me the *night has come when no man can work.* (John ix. 4.) And though I may not presume to think myself necessary; still, was I not of some little use in my limited sphere? Well, everything will go on as before, unaffected by my departure.

Farewell to human society: *I shall behold man no more.* (Isa. xxxviii. 11.) And lastly: farewell to my poor body—a prison always, and now more than likely a torture-chamber. Yet I hope against hope that I may not have to leave it just yet. Nevertheless, go forth I must—stripped more than naked, since I have to part with the body in which I came into the world.

To sum up: I go alone, taking nothing with me save my merits and demerits: *for their works follow them* (Apoc. xiv. 13), to be *manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.* (2 Cor. v. 10.) That will be my condition, perhaps very near, in any case inevitable. I must go as I am: in my present state, such as it is; with my past, such as it was. What then must I do, if death is to find me joyful, or at least, prepared? To this question there are two answers:—

(*a*) Purity of life, or penitence. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way.* (Ps. cxviii. 1.) Happy at death the innocent, the pure—the Gonzaga, the Berchmans, the Kostka! Am I of their number? Happy at least the penitent, the purified! Again: Am I among these? After all my efforts I shall not know with absolute certainty whether I am deserving of love or hate, and must die in a supreme act of confidence. Then, since I cannot *deserve* this final pardon—my only hope of salvation—as a right, how am I to assure it as far as possible? I know how, but do I act upon that

knowledge? My confessions—the ordinary ones, not those made in retreat? Each should be made as though it were my last.

But though I die in a state of grace, there may still remain a debt—perhaps immense—due to the divine justice. I should have the wisdom to pay what I can in advance, by resignation to the sufferings of life, by living the life of a penitent. That is the secret of dying in peace, if not with joy.

(*b*) Habitual detachment. *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* (Matt. v. 3.) Happy the man whom death finds possessed of "Indifference"! *Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth.* (Matt. vi. 19.) He dies without regret who has lived so. What is there to regret? Life? Why, he did not desire a long life rather than a short one! This world? A mere resting-place for the pilgrim whose gaze was fixed on the world to come! Creatures? Nothing but the means, the implements for the great work: that completed he laid down the tools as of no further service. This mortal body? A machine, worn out at present, but to be recovered some day; a prison that held him captive from God: *while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord.* (2 Cor. v. 6.) Is it then an evil to leave it to go to God? We . . . *have a good will to be absent rather from the body and to be present with the Lord.* (2 Cor. v. 8.) Well, then, how is it with me? Is it a death like this that I am preparing for myself? Or is it one anxious and fearful? Why attach the heart to what death will take from me? Lord! Lord! give me the grace of courage and spiritual wisdom!

II.—Let me now consider the celestial country to which death will introduce me. (*a*) How do I know anything concerning it? (*b*) Have I any treasure laid up there? or (*c*) any friends there who expect and will welcome

me ? If these things are so I can die with confidence. How is it with me—I, who am dying ?

(*a*) All I know about the eternity upon which I am entering I know by faith alone : *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Reason guarantees me a hereafter, but the certitude of reason alone is poor consolation to a dying man. Only faith can lighten the darkness of death. It is the last mitigating circumstance the Church will urge on my behalf : *although he has sinned, yet he still retains a true faith in Thee, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.* My last effort—disturbed perhaps, as frequent experience shows, by the desperate assaults of hell—must be, at least implicitly, an act of faith. If I am to die, like the ancient just ones, *according to the faith* (Heb. xi. 13), I must *live by faith,* as they did. (Rom. i. 17.) My constant prayer should be : *Increase our faith* (Luke xvii. 5) ; and meanwhile let my faith teach me something of the land whither I am bound :—

Death will introduce me to my true home, my Father's house : *I will arise and will go to my father.* (Luke xv. 18.) If I know that, why do I think so little about it ? By what fatal aberration do I not live there already in thought and desire ? Why concern myself with worthless trifles : *the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things.* (Wisd. iv. 12) ? Do I wish to die in distress, to cross the threshold of the paternal door as a stranger —with more trepidation at having to enter than desire to do so ?

(*b*) Have I any treasure laid up for eternity ? Yes, if I only will, *now*—my good works, my sacrifices. These are so many deposits in the celestial bank. The heavenly Banker is faithful : *for I know whom I have believed and am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day.* (2 Tim. i. 12.) The capital I invest is *that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation* ; the interest I shall receive,

an eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. iv. 17.) That is the way God understands His business: how do I understand my own? If He closed my account to-day, would there be much to my credit? Alas! when a sacrifice presents itself, nature counts it as a loss. But faith should show it to be pure gain, since it is an advance made to God: *lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven.* (Matt. vi. 20.) Good works, merits, sacrifices: these will comprise my fortune at death. Regret to have neglected, or joy in having courageously amassed: that is the choice.

(*c*) The Church not only bids me depart in the name of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, but also summons the citizens of the heavenly kingdom to meet me—like a family who assemble to welcome a long-absent member. The world above is henceforth my world, the celestial family my family. To die with joy, nothing further is necessary than to contemplate that. But on conditions: first, as always, faith: *the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.* (Heb. xi. 1.) Next, I must have no reason to feel myself altogether unworthy of the celestial family I hope to join. Were I to die to-day, could I dare to think myself certain of recognition, as one possessing, in some degree, the family lineaments? Then must I hasten to evolve and accentuate these lineaments in myself; labour now and always that I may be received by my friends in heaven at least as a prodigal, purified and rehabilitated. But how can I die rejoicing in the anticipation of heaven, if I have seldom or not at all desired and prepared for it during life? Can I say, sincerely, *I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord* (Ps. cxxi. 1), or that I *minded the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth,* and my *life is hid with Christ in God.* (Col. iii. 2-3)? Is this manner of life my own—I, whose ideal is to serve God from pure

love? Again: *our conversation is in heaven* (Phil. iii. 20)—is that where mine is? Do I study the lives of those who are already there, the saints—I, so interested in the sayings and doings of the great ones of earth, past and present? Do I try to profit by their example, endeavour to make their virtues my own? Death found them not merely resigned, but anxious to go: they only died as they had lived; and if I am to join them hereafter, it will only be because I have at least endeavoured to live as I hope to die.

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world. Come, ye blessed of my Father. (Matt. xxv. 34.) Voice of the Church militant which says: *Go!* Voice of the Head of the Church triumphant which says: *Come!* If I am to hear the second then, it will only be because I have tried to understand the first now. And the secret of a happy, or at least a peaceful, end is to detach myself from the visible world from which I shall have to part, and attach myself to the world invisible that faith, and faith alone, will show me open above my head; and death, the great liberator, permit me to enter later on.

Colloquy.—I will ask St. Joseph, who must have died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, to obtain for me the grace of a holy and happy death. Next, I will ask our Blessed Lady to *pray for us, sinners, now and the hour of our death.* And then I will entreat our Lord Jesus Christ that my death may not be sudden *and* unprovided; that I may die fortified with the sacraments of Holy Church; and that He will give me the grace to live as if each succeeding day were to be my last, and each Holy Communion my Viaticum.

IX

The Particular Judgment

My Particular Judgment will follow my death immediately: *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.* (Heb. ix. 27.)

I.—The Judge will be our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to whom *the Father . . . hath given all judgment.* (John v. 22.) No need of accusers or witnesses: *Shall not God search out these things; for he knoweth the secrets of the heart?* (Ps. xliii. 22.)

My Judge and I, then, will be face to face; how will He regard me? As I lie on my death-bed, the Church prays that He *may appear to me with a mild and cheerful countenance.* (Rom. Rit.) Do I dare to hope that this will be so; or have I to fear that He will look upon me *with anger*—as He looked upon the Jews? (Mark iii. 5.)

The Trial. Instantaneous: *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.* (1 Cor. xv. 52.)

The Indictment. *Then shall the written book be brought.* (Mass for the Dead.) What book? My own conscience, penetrated to its innermost recesses by the glance of Jesus Christ. *Shewing every deed and thought* (*ibid.*)—yes, everything. My deeds without exception; my innumerable words—long since forgotten, even by myself; my intentions; desires; consent to, or voluntary complacency in this or that thought; the precise gravity of my faults in themselves, in their consequences, in their relation to the lights and graces I received. The whole—so confused in my own mind—

will be disentangled and made clear. *What answer wilt thou make to God, who knows all thy sins; thou who art sometimes afraid of the looks of an angry man?* (Imitation of Christ, I. xxiv.)

The Sentence. Two are already foretold: *Come, ye blessed; Depart from me, you cursed.* (Matt. xxv. 34, 41.) One of these two will be passed upon me—the one I have prepared for myself in my life on earth. Let me try to conceive the feelings of a soul as it hears its own sentence—one of the two, for there will be no other. I shall hear it some day: which is it to be?

II.—Since I must appear before the Judgment-seat I should endeavour to forestall its terrors, and live so that I may find myself there with confidence—is it not the work of my life to do so? For this there are two principal conditions:—

(*a*) That I judge myself severely now; and submit to be judged by the representatives of Jesus Christ on earth—my religious superiors, my confessor, my lawful superiors in the world. War to the knife with illusions, *i.e.* the inordinate affections that give rise to them! Make good and careful confessions, adequately prepared—the current confession may be my last: why not? At each confession, my divine Judge deigns to place *the written book* in my hands, and say: "Erase the record if you will!" Marvellous! but literally true, nevertheless. At my Particular Judgment, *all* the pages can be blank, as far as guilt is concerned. It only rests with myself: *Behold, now is the day of salvation.* (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

(*b*) Furthermore, Christ Himself has said: *Judge not: and you shall not be judged. Condemn not: and you shall not be condemned.* (Luke vi. 37.) And He has also laid down the principle on which my Particular Judgment will be carried out: *With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged.* (Matt. vii. 2.) This does not

imply permission to commit sins, other than the judgment or condemnation of others. In practice, the man who refrains from sitting in judgment on his neighbour is humble and charitable, and thus protected in great measure against falling into other grave sins. Then, if I would appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ with confidence, I must cease to judge others; either rashly or severely on actual facts; either expressly—the worst form—or tacitly, nursing my judgments in secret. A sad form of satisfaction is this proud and wicked propensity to belittle others, to arrogate to myself the position of a superior! It is a usurpation, unconscious perhaps but very real, of the judicial power of Jesus Christ! *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth.* (Rom. xiv. 4.) Grave peril for me, too, at the hour of my own Judgment where there will be *judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy.* (James ii. 13.) On the other hand, there is a formal promise of not being even judged if I have not judged others. Again my final sentence rests with myself: *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* (Matt. v. 7.)

Colloquy to our Lord Jesus Christ. Where, outside the Christian dispensation, can one who has to meet a capital charge confer with his judge, amicably and in advance? Such is permitted to me, and therefore I will confer with my divine Judge at this moment and appeal to His Heart. And I will ask Him to grant me the grace to restrain my inclination to judge my neighbour; and also to judge myself with such a just severity, that I may be able to say to Him, with all confidence:—

> Who just Judge of vengeance art
> Thy forgiveness now impart
> Ere th' accepted day depart.
> (Sequence, Mass for the Dead.)

X

Hell

The ideal of a Christian should be to serve God from pure love. But poor human nature is only too liable to forget it. Then comes temptation : what is to happen if fear does not restrain me ? And, though there may have been nothing more than venial sin in my past year, I ought still to consider this question of hell because, up to my very last moment, I shall be a man who can yet lose his soul.

First Prelude.—In Holy Scripture, hell is often called *the lake ; the abyss ; the pool of fire and brimstone ; the bottomless pit ; the great furnace, the smoke of which darkened the air and the sun.* It is not unreasonable then to imagine myself standing on the edge of a fiery lake of immense extent and unfathomable depth—a gigantic crater, burning eternally.

Second Prelude.—I will ask the grace of holy fear, as a last safeguard : that, if my love for God fail to hinder me from offending Him, my fear of His judgments may do so. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear : for I am afraid of thy judgments.* (Ps. cxviii. 120.)

I. The Sights.—I behold a vast sea of fire—now still, now agitated as by a tempest. On its surface the souls of the Lost are tossed by the flames like wreckage. Some attempt to emerge from the abyss and are whelmed back by devils, or fall back in frenzy of their

own accord ; others seem stricken with the torpor of despair ; while in others again are seen the fruitless efforts of a rage that still struggles on. Terror, fury, desperation in every countenance. All are haunted by the most desolating visions—the same spectacle as they themselves present. Add to this *the exterior darkness.* (Matt. viii. 12.) " It was all dark," said St. Teresa, in her famous vision of hell, " and yet—O mystery !—we saw everything most terrible to behold."

Then ? Devils. Satan in his kingdom. No need of disguise now : he appears as he is—horrible and terrific of aspect. Ever tormented in spite of their triumph, or more correctly by reason of that very triumph, and more furious than ever, the devils avenge themselves on their victims, strike, trample upon and spurn them back into the flames : *bow down, that we may go over.* (Isa. li. 23.)

A nightmare ! you say, or the effects of a morbid imagination. Very possibly ; but nevertheless a logical—though inadequate—development of the dread sentence recorded in the Gospel : *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* (Matt. xxv. 41.)

II. The Sounds.—In the intervals of silence amid the infernal uproar we hear the thousand voices of the Lost : *weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matt. xiii. 42)—hoarse shouts of rage, piercing shrieks of intense suffering. And, amid the wild clamour, some few intelligible echoes of the everlasting lament of the Lost strike upon the ear. Fruitless confessions, with fury in their very fruitlessness. *We fools . . . have erred from the way of truth* (Wisd. v. 6) ; we *loved darkness rather than light* (John iii. 19) ; we *have been able to show no mark of virtue.* (Wisd. v. 13.) Our loss is our own doing, for *we are consumed in our own wickedness* (*ibid.*) *What hath pride profited us ? Or what advantage hath the*

boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow. (Wisd. v. 8-9.) Sometimes we suffered even in our pleasures, and took more pains to lose our souls than would have sufficed to save them: *We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways.* (Wisd. v. 7.) *Such things as these the sinners said in hell.* (Wisd. v. 14.) Confession that profits nothing, remorse that is unavailing, *mea culpa* turned to bitterness and rage.

Then the maledictions heaped on self. *Let the day perish wherein I was born* (Job iii. 3)—how much more applicable to the Lost than to Job. *It were better for him, if that man had not been born,* said our divine Lord, of Judas (Matt. xxvi. 24); but can we doubt that in hell those words are on the lips of all? Imprecations, frantic appeals for annihilation: *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us. And to the hills: Cover us.* (Luke xxiii. 30.) But the infernal kingdom perishes not: annihilation answers not.

Mutual curses and reproaches: of partners in guilt between themselves, the tempted against the tempter, the disciple towards his master in incredulity; their readers against the writers, poets, historians who undermined their faith or purity. Imprecations of each on every other—for each of the Lost looks on all as enemies and is the universal enemy himself. Contempt, hatred, contumely: such is the unique social bond, the entire social intercourse in hell.

The gibes of Satan: "O man, favoured by God at my expense, destined to fill my vacant place on high! Behold you in the same place as myself!" *Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee at thy coming. . . . Thou art become like unto us.* (Isa. xiv. 9-10.) "Miserable fool! who heeded my falsehoods rather than the words of thy God; who have esteemed my yoke sweeter and my burden lighter than those of thy Master. What think you of them now?"

III. The Interior State of the Lost.—*Their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched.* (Isa. lxvi. 24.) A lost soul is itself a hell, in which *no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.* (Job x. 22.) In a well-ordered soul peace and joy result from the combined effort of the natural powers to attain their common and final goal. In other words, from *doing the truth in charity* (Eph. iv. 15)—the practical truth, seen, loved, realized or at least realizable by love. In a lost soul the accord between the natural powers is broken for ever. The intellect sees the truth but the will abhors it. To speak more correctly, the will retains the natural, invincible desire for truth; but since it feels itself condemned and repulsed by this same truth and for ever incapable of realizing it, blazes forth in hatred. Thus ensues an inexplicable war of the will, not only against the intellect but also against itself. We consider the dispositions of the Lost under three aspects:—

(*a*) Towards self. He loved himself by natural necessity, and now does so more than ever—being confirmed in pride. He sees what he could have been—a saint even; what he has been—a fool and a craven; what he is—a lost soul and through his own fault. He knows he will be such for ever—enemy of heaven and hell alike. The natural reaction of self-love supervenes; and behold him seized with aversion, disgust and horror of himself. We see something similar in this life. A man commits a heinous crime. Finding himself ruined and disgraced, his mind loses its balance. Sometimes madness results, sometimes suicide, more often he seeks forgetfulness in feverish activity or drink. But in hell! No madness, no suicide, no drink, no distraction, not even sleep. Always these two selves face to face, of which one abhors the other without having the power to cease to love it.

(*b*) Towards creatures. Devoured by longing to fly from self, the lost soul would instinctively dissipate itself on creatures, as on earth. What are they? Flames, devils, the other lost ones—all that remains to it out of the entire creation, and each hateful and hating as the soul itself. And if the lost soul reflect on the creatures of other times—friends, places, activities? Does he love them still? Yes, but with a wild, disordered love—since he is confirmed in malice as in pride. But he hates them at the same time, both because they are lost to him and because they are refused to his desperate need of consolation. Again contradiction, chaos—the punishment of the soul divided against itself, without power ever to reunite or reconcile self with self. O Creatures! If I adored you ever so little on earth, or rather, if I adored myself in you; see to what you have led me—to hate you in hating myself!

(*c*) Towards God. Beside itself with horror and abandoned by creatures, to whom can the soul turn? To God, for nought else remains. On earth he knew, he believed God to be the supreme and only Good. Now he not only knows but sees it, and with a clarity and intensity to which we cannot attain in this life. Moreover, nothing interposes itself between the soul and God. By natural necessity the will tends to God; but with this clearness of view there arises an overpowering desire for Him. If only this desire could be satisfied by love! Impossible! He is ever met by the divine response: *I know you not.* (Luke xiii. 25.) Again is the universal law fulfilled: love scorned turns to hatred. And now he curses and blasphemes this Sovereign Good, who, because He has refused Himself, has become the soul's sovereign evil. On earth, hatred can be a solace, a pleasure even—being the revenge of humiliated nature. In hell, hatred is a punishment pure and simple; both because of its impotence,

bitterly resented, and also because it is at once according and contrary to nature. Here, a man either revels in hatred or overcomes it : in hell he longs to hate and is furious with himself for hating. To hate the saints, the B.V.M., the Sacred Heart, God Himself ! What horror even to think of it ! And yet it is done in hell.

IV. ETERNAL.—Irrevocable, this *Depart from me, you cursed.* No pardon, no return, no reconciliation possible. God has banished the reprobate for ever. Perhaps we can recall the severance of some human friendship, and the bitterness with which we said : " All is over between us." But, in hell, what despair at the rupture of our friendship with God ! ALL HOPE ABANDON YE WHO ENTER HERE : what more terrific has mortal mind ever conceived ? Incessant the punishment—without pause, oblivion or death. Hell is eternal : absolutely final and unalterable—a state that should not exist for an instant without killing the victim, and yet will not render him the service of doing so. To live in fire, in abjection, in horror of self, surroundings and of God ! Such a life is, in very truth, *the second death.* (Apoc. xxi. 8.)

Can I say, with perfect sincerity, that I have never deserved this fearful fate ? Even though this happiness be mine, I stand none the less on the very verge of hell —separated from the abyss by the space of a single mortal sin. This fear was present to the mind of St. Paul himself : *lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.* (1 Cor. ix. 27.) Who has promised me the supreme gift of final perseverance ? Not being able to deserve it as a right, do I deserve it by the fidelity of my daily life ? What stands between me and damnation ? Only the grace of God : how do I correspond to it ? And the liberty that God has left me : what use am I making of it ?

COLLOQUY.—I make a colloquy to Christ our Lord, praising and blessing the divine longanimity which has borne with me up to now. And I will conclude with a *Pater Noster*—the name by which I can still address Almighty God. I am still within reach of His mercy; the Blood of Jesus Christ still flows efficaciously for me; His Cross still bars the way to hell. Yes: Almighty God, whom I have so often offended, is still my Father; and if I have not long since been exiled from the Christian family, it is only because the divine pity and mercy have kept me from such grave temptations as might have resulted in my eternal ruin.

XI

Judas

The history of Judas conveys a twofold warning: that an inordinate affection can lead me into grave sin; and that, as Judas was lost through losing confidence in the mercy of God, my own ruin may be effected in the same manner.

First Prelude.—I draw a mental picture of Judas when he was called to the apostolate by our Lord (Luke vi.)—his countenance good, open, peaceful. I do the same as he leaves the Cenacle (John xiii.), and note his altered expression—sombre, sullen, ignoble.

Second Prelude.—I will ask two graces: that I may have courage to war against and overcome my own inordinate affections; and also that I may ever repose unbounded confidence in the merciful Heart of Jesus.

I.—It would be a false impression to conceive Judas as a monster of iniquity from his youth up. Judas was a man like others—possibly better than many. He began well, he persevered for a time, he fell away and ruined himself by yielding to an inordinate affection. Judas commenced like me; the same cause, followed to its logical conclusion, could make me end like him.

Judas began well. If not, how could he have become a disciple of Jesus Christ at all? More than that, how else could the Master have selected him as one of the privileged Twelve? Behold him then, living and

conversing with the Master as one who is not so much servant as friend (John xv. 15); less disciple than confidant, to whom *it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. xiii. 11.) He contemplates the sanctity of Jesus day by day; he witnesses His works of mercy. Perhaps, like the seventy-two missionaries sent out by Jesus (Luke x.), he preached and wrought miracles in His name. In any case, he spent more than two years in this terrestrial paradise.

That is to say, he persevered for a time as he had begun. The incident of our Lord's discourse upon the Bread of Life goes to prove this. *After this, many of his disciples turned back and walked no more with him.* (John vi. 67.) The Twelve remained and Judas among them. This exterior fidelity supposes a period of interior fidelity; but how long it lasted we have no means of knowing. Our Lord did foretell the defection of one Apostle at the same time: *Have I not chosen you twelve? and one of you is a devil.* (71.) But it is evident that, up to the time of the Last Supper, the disciples had no suspicion as to the identity of the traitor. Otherwise, when our Lord declared, as He sat at table, that *one of you is about to betray me,* every eye had turned on Judas. Instead of which, each only trembled for himself: *Is it I, Lord?* (Matt. xxvi. 21, 22.)

In this way we may explain the longanimity of Jesus. He knew what was in the heart of Judas but, as the latter had given no scandal as yet, He would leave him the opportunity of entering into himself, keep him near His Person, let him continue to have charge of the common purse. And He also knows what is in *my* heart! Have I no need of a like forbearance?

But whenever it may have commenced, the fall of Judas was caused by an inordinate affection, not resisted but rather cherished until it became a consuming passion. In his case it was love of money:

he was a thief. (John xii. 6.) Perhaps I say: Oh! I've nothing to fear on that score. And this as though there were no other inordinate affections capable of leading the heart astray! Seductions of heart and senses—why, even a vocation and vows are not sufficient to brush them aside effectively and for ever! Seductions of self-love: love of success, of being always in the public eye, of popularity. Seductions of self-will—some people there are who will never accept advice, much less seek it. Independence of spirit—very dangerous in these days; love of intellectual pursuits for their own sake; fascination for the modern and contempt for the traditional. How many pitfalls await the careless, the lax, the over-curious! The precise nature of the bait with which Satan angles for souls is immaterial to him—provided he catches them. He caught Judas by avarice; he has means in plenty to catch me. Am I free from all inordinate affections? Each one is a chain, of which Satan holds the other end.

No, Judas was not a monster; he was a man like me. At one period of his life he was possibly better and more fervent than I am. He was ruined: I may be ruined too. Then I must watch and pray!

II.—We may now consider the effects of an inordinate affection in the soul of Judas. The very violence with which they blazed forth just before the Passion proves the antecedent ravages they had made—just as the final collapse of a building reveals the progress of years of decay.

(*a*) Hardness of heart. Towards the poor: *not because he cared for the poor.* (John xii. 6.) Towards Jesus Christ warning him: *One of you that eateth with me shall betray me* (Mark xiv. 18); remonstrating with him: *Friend, whereto art thou come?* (Matt. xxvi. 50); *Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?* (Luke xxii. 48.) It is the universal experience: *Behold,*

I stand at the gate and knock (Apoc. iii. 20), but there is no welcome from the heart within. An inordinate affection is in possession and refuses entry to Jesus, lest it should have to yield its place to Him. Is it not true—this ? Do I not know something about it ?

(*b*) Hypocrisy. In the simulated compassion of Judas for the poor : *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor ?* (John xii. 5.) At the Last Supper : *Is it I, Rabbi ?* when he had already arranged with the chief priests to betray the Master. In the Garden : *Hail, Rabbi. And he kissed him*—when he was in the very act of doing so. (Matt. xxvi. 25, 49.)

Experience again. Every inordinate affection, yielded to, warps the sense of right ; and the more enlightened the victim the greater the danger. My love of ease, my vanity, my over-sensitiveness, my pretensions, and the rest—I must conceal them all for the sake of my reputation, for the honour of my cloth perhaps. I must make an effort to keep up appearances. More : I am fully aware that conscience condemns this inordinate affection ; and yet will not summon up sufficient resolution to try to rid myself of it. So I endeavour either not to see the light at all, or only to see it as I want to see it : to reconcile the inordinate affection with conscience ; to lie a little—not to man, but to myself and God.

(*c*) Loss of all sense of right. The inordinate affection has developed and become a passion. Even hypocrisy is discarded. Judas seeks the chief priests : *What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you ?* (Matt. xxvi. 15.)

A person who is not a Judas and would sacrifice everything rather than become one, may, unless he is very careful, entertain such inordinate affections as love of social success, praise, popularity. Does he not risk, more or less unconsciously, negotiating little

compromises from which Jesus will emerge, not betrayed in any sense, but somewhat belittled? Thus a priest or religious may find himself saying, in effect, to the lay-folk with whom he has to deal: "What will you give me if I descend from the serious, spiritual man, whose only concern is the good of souls? Give me the reputation of a wit, a good talker, a keen, observant man of the world. At the price of this trifle of appreciation, I will not bore you with spiritual matters." Or again: with people of feeble faith on the one hand, or of 'advanced' opinions on the other, will he not be tempted to 'water down' something of the uncompromising spirit of faith? Why? To get a name for being broad-minded and comprehensive; to save himself from the stigma of being bigoted or reactionary. Granted that in all this there is nothing grave and in any case nothing extreme. But it is human respect nevertheless; and in human respect there is always a tacit bargain, an echo—very distant but still real—of *What will you give me?* And may not this very human desire to please lead us much further, if not kept in check?

(*d*) Tyranny of habit; tyranny of the devil. Become a habit, the inordinate affection grows and becomes a compelling force, ever more difficult to resist—and the victim perhaps unconscious of his bonds. When Judas began to rob the common purse, had any one said to him: "Beware! unhappy man; six months hence you will be selling the Master Himself," he would have protested with indignation. Yet it came to that.

An inordinate affection is the natural ally of the devil, who establishes his empire in the soul by its means. *The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him* (John xiii. 2), urges him to immediate action. *He therefore, having received the morsel, went out immediately.* (30.) Satan would enter into my soul too; and my inordinate affections, in

closing it to Jesus, tend to open it to him. What folly to entertain and cherish them !

(*e*) And now we note the result thus far : mental and moral confusion. Judas betrays his Master, but evidently hopes that Jesus will be able and willing to extricate Himself from His peril. This seems proven by the fact that the condemnation came as a surprise to Judas, who, *seeing that he was condemned, repented himself.* (Matt. xxvii. 3.) He had hoped for another issue of the affair ; but—and herein is the confusion—he feared it at the same time. Hence his instructions to the soldiers : *Lay hold on him : and lead him away carefully.* (Mark xiv. 44.) Judas seems to have seen only one thing clearly : his pieces of silver—all beside was uncertain and contradictory.

Hardness of heart, hypocrisy, cynicism, slavery, delirium : such were the consequences of an inordinate affection nurtured in the heart of an Apostle of Jesus Christ. And I ? Our Lord said of His sheep : *no man shall pluck them out of my hand.* (John x. 28.) No : no enemy from without, neither the world nor the devil. But I myself can force this sovereign hand to open and let me go. It will suffice for me to wish it ; and I can be led to wish it by giving myself up unreservedly to an inordinate affection. I must watch, pray and resist.

III.—Judas leaves the Cenacle with the devil in his heart. Is he already lost ? No, not yet. Neither is he lost when he betrays with a kiss, nor even when he puts the fatal halter round his neck. He can still save his soul because he can still repent. But repentance, though possible, has now become extraordinarily difficult ; and this is the most terrible effect of an inordinate affection of long standing. It needs an exceptional grace and a prodigious effort to extricate oneself from its toils.

Judas begins : *repented himself* (Matt. xxvii. 3), and—materially speaking—he accomplishes his repentance. He confesses : *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.* (4.) He makes satisfaction by ridding himself of the creature in which he has offended : *brought back the thirty pieces of silver.* (3.) The chief priests—following the cynical custom of the world, which disowns the dupe who is of no further use to it—refuse to accept them : *What is that to us ? Look thou to it.* (4.) So, *casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed.* (5.) Judas, who the night before could think of nothing else, to-day never wishes to see this money again.

What more is wanted for complete rehabilitation ? Confidence in the mercy of God ; which implies at least the beginning of love for Him. The present repentance of Judas is nothing more than horror and dismay—the repentance of Cain : *my iniquity is greater than that I may receive pardon* (Gen. iv. 13), the repentance of the Lost. Practically he challenges the Heart of Jesus to be sufficiently generous to pardon him, and seals his reprobation by suicide : *went and hanged himself with an halter.* (Matt. xxvii. 5.)

Let us now suppose in Judas the confidence he lacked, and rewrite his history after the betrayal, as it might—and could—have been :—

Hearing that his Master has been condemned, and is even now on the way to Calvary, Judas rushes to the spot. All dishevelled and in tears, he breaks through the crowd, casts the pieces of silver on the ground and falls at the feet of Jesus, crying : *I have sinned.* The Master forgives instantly, raises up and embraces the penitent—giving him the kiss of peace in exchange for the kiss in the Garden. Then Judas is seen disputing with Simon the honour of carrying the Cross ; and, later, on his knees on Calvary, striking his breast. After the Resurrection he sees his Risen Lord—perhaps

he is even honoured with a special apparition to emphasize his complete forgiveness. Reinstated in the Apostolic College, by command of the Master, Judas assists at the Ascension. He receives the Holy Ghost with the rest and, like them, sets out to evangelize the world. Having traversed many countries and converted numberless people to the Faith of Christ, a price of thirty pieces of silver is at length placed upon his head, when, having been betrayed by one of his most trusted disciples, he crowns a long and fruitful apostolate by martyrdom. And on one day in the year the Church Universal celebrates the Feast of St. Judas, Apostle and Penitent—the epistle of the Mass being taken from his famous General Epistle on Confidence in the Mercy of God.

Why should this have been impossible ? Why should he who might have been St. Judas be the only person of whose eternal ruin we are certain ? *Woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born.* (Matt. xxvi. 24.) It rested with himself alone ; he had sufficient grace. May it not be that, by sheer force of hardening his heart, he placed himself in a state of quasi-moral impossibility of corresponding to it ? It may be so ; but if it was so, to what was it due ? To the inordinate affection he had himself entertained and nourished until it became an all-absorbing passion. This it was that extinguished the last spark of right feeling and loyalty in his soul—just as a malady, against which a man will not struggle by the will to get well, uses the apathy of the patient to secure a fatal issue.

Colloquy.—I will enter into myself humbly and sincerely. Have I any inordinate affections ? Which is the most inveterate, the most formidable ? I must recognize and avow it : it may ruin me as it ruined Judas.

I will lay this inordinate affection at the feet of my Lord and beseech Him—not to release me from it, but to give me courage to overcome it myself. And this I will resolve to do, not only by daily and hourly resistance, but by doing what is better : acting contrary to it by the practice of the opposite virtue. Above all : I will entreat our Lord that, however base this inordinate affection may be, or whatever length of time it may have enthralled me, He will never permit me to enter upon the path of treason, or lose my confidence in His merciful Heart.

XII

St. Peter

We may commence by a brief consideration of the character of St. Peter. His was a noble nature: frank, upright, impetuous. He was humble: *I am a sinful man, O Lord* (Luke v. 8); self-sacrificing: *we have left all things and have followed thee* (Matt. xix. 27); faithful: *Lord, to whom shall we go?* (John vi. 69); more enlightened than his brethren: *flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.* (Matt. xvi. 17.) Against all this he had the very human prejudice against the idea of redemption by opprobrium and suffering: *Lord, be it far from thee.* (Matt. xvi. 22.) Nevertheless it was not this last that caused his downfall. He fell by presumption—over-confidence in himself. He repented and recovered himself by confiding in the mercy of God.

First Prelude.—To bring before the eyes of my imagination the various scenes as they occur in the course of the meditation.

Second Prelude.—I will ask our Lord that I may learn, by the example of the Apostle, to have the utmost diffidence in myself, combined with the most perfect confidence in the divine assistance in case of need and—in the last extremity—supreme trust in the clemency of the Sacred Heart.

I.—It was the misfortune of St. Peter to illustrate

presumption in its only three forms. The first we may call positive presumption, fruitful in protestations and deaf to all warnings. The Master and His disciples are in the Cenacle, and the conversation turns on the Passion. He warns them all of the trial that awaits them and foretells their desertion. (Matt. xxvi. 31.) A special caution is addressed to Peter, whose fall is implicitly predicted by mention of his recovery: *thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren.* (Luke xxii. 32.) Of those assembled, Peter alone protests: others may be scandalized—he, never. The Master insists, particularizes—before cock-crow the following morning Peter will have denied Him thrice. (Matt. xxvi. 33, 34.) Again does Peter protest: he will follow the Master to prison and death. (Luke xxii. 33.) And now, that they may not appear less devoted than Peter, *in like manner said all the disciples.* (Matt. xxvi. 35.) Our Lord makes no reply: such strident presumption is not to be cured by words. It needs the rude lesson of accomplished facts.

Then are we never to make promises to our Lord in the fulness of our heart? That depends. St. Peter promised, relying on his own strength of will. St. Paul told the Romans that *in all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us.* (Rom. viii. 37.) All the difference lies in the intention—the source whence we hope to derive our support.

Do I say: "I am feeble, hesitating, fearful; at least I shall never be ruined by presumption"? Take care! there are more ways of being presumptuous than one. There is also negative presumption, which consists in forgetfulness or neglect of necessary precautions, and —bold or timid—I am ever in danger.

We are in the Garden. Peter, with James and John, is about to be an eye-witness of what we may venture to call the (to him) most scandalizing of all the Mysteries: the Agony in the Garden. *My soul is*

sorrowful even unto death, He tells them. *Stay you here and watch with me.* (Matt. xxvi. 38.) He withdraws a little and prays. (39.) Returning to the three, He finds them asleep. (40.) *And he saith to Peter : Simon, sleepest thou ? Couldst thou not watch one hour ?* (Mark xiv. 37.) What a commentary on the protestations in the Cenacle ! He, who so loudly asserted his readiness to follow his Master to prison and death, cannot sacrifice an hour's rest for Him ! Our Lord warns them once again : *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* (Matt. xxvi. 41.) Useless warning ! The Apostles go to sleep again ; and herein is the second form of presumption : the indolence that would overcome temptations without being at the pains to foresee and forestall them.

My own case, more or less. Should I not guard my senses better ; be beforehand with my inordinate affections by acting counter to them ; be on the alert against creatures, the devil, most of all against myself ? Should I not pray constantly that I may not be led into temptation ? And if I had done this faithfully, should I not be less a sinner than I am ? Not that prayer will dispense me from effort ; but given prayer and effort combined, *it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish.* (Phil. ii. 13.)

Behold Peter then, enfeebled by lack of vigilance and prayer. Our Lord is arrested. Impetuous as ever, Peter draws a sword and strikes. (John xviii. 10.) A moment later all his courage vanishes and he, like the rest, *leaving him all fled away.* (Mark xiv. 50.) A short time and he recovers himself so far as to follow his captive Master afar off (Matt. xxvi. 58)—my own manner, alas ! Feeble return of fidelity but rash withal, for it leads to the third sort of presumption : placing himself without precautions in a dangerous occasion. He enters the court of the high priest, mixes with the enemies of Jesus, warms himself and

converses with them. (John xviii. 18.) Recognized, questioned and disowning his Master a first time, he still has not the wisdom to escape : *sat with the servants, that he might see the end.* (Matt. xxvi. 58.) Accosted a second and yet a third time, denials succeed one another. The downfall of Peter is accomplished.

Here we have a picture of the priest or religious who —without mission or any hope of spiritual fruit— entangles himself in purely secular affairs. Also of a Catholic of any sort who trifles with dangerous matters, indulges in promiscuous reading with risk to his faith, possibly filling his mind with impressions that should not be there and which will cause unending trouble before they are finally banished : *he that loveth danger shall perish in it.* (Ecclus. iii. 27.)

Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. (Matt. xxvi. 74.) That is what the best-intentioned and most generous nature can come to when it relies on itself alone, forgets or neglects vigilance and prayer, and places itself voluntarily in dangerous occasions.

II.—The fall of Peter being now complete, we have to consider his recovery. In this we shall see two forces at work : the indulgence and kindness of the Lord Jesus on the one hand ; and the true repentance—that which loves and confides—of Peter on the other.

And the Lord turning looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord. (Luke xxii. 61.) Up to now he had forgotten all : his vocation, his three years' fidelity, his promised prerogatives, the Master's prediction of his downfall and his own audacity in gainsaying Him. And I ? Should I be so prone to sin if I did not forget so easily ? Every time I fall I forget God's position and my own : all I owe Him, all I have promised Him, all He has promised me. The very fact of its being forgetfulness lessens the actual

culpability no doubt. But is it not indirectly culpable in its causes : spiritual languor entertained, allurements of natural activity yielded to, dissipation of mind indulged in, want of recollection and prayer ? I must be more energetic, more careful to recall frequently who Jesus Christ is, what I am myself and, above all, that without Him I can do nothing. (John xv. 5.)

Then Peter, remembering, goes out. (Luke xxii. 62.) Whatever the cause—shame or horror—it is wise. He flies the occasion of sin. A practical lesson for me. I must leave that company in which I feel dissipation of mind growing upon me, and at once. Quit that gathering in which the conversation turns to criticism or disparagement ; or at least protest by silence. Drop that book, that line of thought which begins to disturb my imagination. At the first sign of danger let me hasten to escape.

And Peter going out, wept bitterly. (62.) That is to say, his grief is intense and he would be inconsolable if he thought only of his sin. Bitterly though he wept, there was no bitterness in his tears, none of that anger and vexation which show, not so much regret for the fault as pride disappointed with itself. Whither did he go ? A meditation, ascribed to St. Bonaventure, shows the Apostle going to weep with our Blessed Lady, who thus inaugurated her rôle of Refuge of sinners. And tradition has it that St. Peter never ceased to weep. Why not ?—*my sin is always before me.* (Ps. l. 5.) And as in the meditation on my own sins, let me ask of God, through the intercession of St. Peter, the grace of tears for my own innumerable transgressions.

III.—We may now consider how our Lord deals with the repentant sinner. Peter was, of course, forgiven when he abandoned the occasion of his sin—the court of the high priest—and made his Act of Contrition—wept bitterly. His confession must have been made when

his Risen Master *appeared to Simon.* (Luke xxiv. 34.) For, not only is there no mention of his forgiveness later on, but it is unthinkable that he should have seen his Lord for the first time since his denial without throwing himself at His feet and asking pardon for his fault.

The actual rehabilitation of St. Peter took place at the sea of Tiberias. (John xxi.) Seven of the Apostles went fishing. Their Master appeared on the shore and a miraculous draught of fishes ensued. (6.) Peter, having thrown himself into the sea, swam to greet his Lord; but was sent back, and the evangelist records that *Simon Peter . . . drew the net to land, full of great fishes* (11.)—a fact that seems significant. The fishermen were then invited to a repast. (12.) After which, reparation. Thrice had Peter denied his Master: now a threefold profession of love is asked of him. Before the first one comes a delicate allusion to his presumption in the Cenacle: *Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized.* (Matt. xxvi. 33.) After what has happened will Peter still protest that he loves his Master more than the other disciples? (15.) Peter evades the question, contenting himself with a simple assurance of his own personal devotedness.

And now, contrition, confession, and satisfaction having been made, and Peter fortified against future elation by the remembrance of his fall, not only is he not deprived of his promised prerogatives, but he is confirmed in them. He is to feed the lambs—the faithful; the sheep—their pastors; to guard the entire Christian flock. Peter quitted the shores of the lake as the Vicar of Christ in the present, with the honour of martyrdom reserved for him in the future: *another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.* (18.) Both on condition of following Jesus, not as heretofore *afar off* (Matt. xxvi. 58),

but close to. (John xxi. 19.) And that is how Jesus deals with the repentant sinner: He forgives, He forgets, He restores. And the same Sacred Heart which dealt thus leniently and royally with St. Peter, is ready to deal with me in the same manner—but only on the same conditions.

Conclusion.—I, who have now concluded the penitential section of this retreat, can, if I only will, leave it in some sort as St. Peter left this memorable episode: repentant, forgiven, rehabilitated—not assuredly as Prince of Pastors, but in my state of priest, religious or simple layman. Am I a priest? I have to help others to save their souls directly, by the faithful execution of my office. Am I a layman? I have to help others indirectly, by my good example: *so let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* (Matt. v. 16.) In either case I have my own soul to save. And to do that I must merge my love of self in the love of the Sacred Heart, which has so loved me that It hesitated not to shed its Blood for me; which still bears with me, and *forgiveth all my iniquities and healeth all my diseases.* (Ps. cii. 3.) I have so to carry out the divine injunction: *Follow me* (John xxi. 19), that I may be able to say: *I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii. 20.) And the remainder of the Exercises are to teach me how to do this.

Colloquy.—I will address myself to our Lord through St. Peter. Calling to mind once more the salutary affections evoked by the preceding meditations—fear of God, shame of myself in my facility for sin, the disorder of my past life, in my ingratitude and worldliness—I will make a humble and sincere resolution to pray more earnestly, watch more carefully, avoid dangerous occasions more completely. And I will ask

the intercession of St. Peter that these my resolutions may be received and confirmed by the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord which showed Itself so merciful and compassionate towards Him ; and is ever *nigh to all that call upon him in truth.* (Ps. cxliv. 18.)

XIII

SECOND WEEK

The Kingdom of Christ

Having considered our essential relations with God, creatures and ourselves, we now have to consider our relations with Jesus Christ—not Jesus Christ in glory, but Jesus Christ in opprobrium and suffering. *It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.* (Matt. x. 25.) That is the truth concerning our relations with Him.

St. Ignatius, who lived in the ages of chivalry, supposes an earthly king who, having determined on a holy war the object of which is to conquer all infidel countries for Jesus Christ, summons his subjects to his standard. Victory is assured, as also participation in its spoils. While he promises to be ever in the forefront of battle himself, he stipulates that they must emulate him, not only in courage, but also in their willingness to endure all privation and fatigue. What would every true and loyal heart reply ?

The Saint then explains the spiritual significance of his parable. The king is Jesus Christ Himself, his subjects are the entire Christian body throughout the world, each and every individual of which He calls to His service.

First Prelude.—To see with the eyes of the imagination the towns, villages, etc. where our Lord was accustomed to preach. (Matt. ix. 35.) This done, let the vision pass and concentrate my attention on myself.

SECOND PRELUDE.—I will ask that I may not be deaf to His call, but prompt in responding to it and diligent in accomplishing His most holy will. Perhaps I have not closed my ears to the first great call to the religious state or otherwise; but how is it with respect to the thousand-and-one daily calls to live entirely according to my particular vocation? *To-day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* (Ps. xciv. 8.)

I.—I reflect on the motives that should impel me to accomplish the entire good pleasure of the Master who calls. These I have meditated upon already: His rights—I belong to Him; His goodness and benefits—all I am or have I owe to Him; His forgiveness—often and always. What can I refuse to Him who has pardoned so much?

Next, as to the enterprise itself. Christ wishes to reduce all His enemies to subjection and deigns to call upon me to assist. Not the enemies without—the world and the devil; but the enemies within—*my* worldliness, *my* sensuality, *my* pride. Moreover, this war is a necessity for me because: either I subdue them or they will strike me with death eternal. *Who is the man that desireth life?* (Ps. xxxiii. 13.) *Why will you die, O house of Israel?* (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) I must die or kill.

What is the outcome to be? Certain victory for me if I only will. Under the standard of Jesus Christ he only dies who has not the courage to live.

And the reward? Heaven: that will be the spoils of victory for me.

The conditions. "My will (says our Lord) is to subdue my two enemies, sensuality and pride, and thus to enter into the glory of my Father. And whoever would accompany me there must follow me in labour and suffering here." There is no need to prove the labours and sufferings of Christ upon earth: they are

written in the record of His life. But why did He permit them to be carried to such extremes? To ransom me? No: for such excess of opprobrium and torment was in no way necessary for it. A prayer, even a mute desire coming from Him, would have been infinite in value and sufficed amply. Why then? To set an example that should inspire me. In spiritual ailments there is no treatment possible from outside; the remedy must come from within. Thus sensuality is cured by mortification, pride by humiliation—remedies most repugnant to nature. So, to stimulate my courage, the All Pure and Humble permitted Himself to be treated as though He had been the proudest and most sensual of men. *Whither I go you know: and the way you know.* (John xiv. 4.) And He calls me to follow Him by the way of opprobrium and suffering. Well: what is my answer to be?

II.—So, worldly and slothful as I am, I offer myself to labour incessantly and unremittingly to combat my pride and sensuality. But how and why?

(*a*) To offer myself without reserve to the labour necessary is elementary prudence, for it means mortal and deliberate venial sin avoided, habitual indifference, all failings overcome, every duty accomplished.

(*b*) But generosity urges that I should not rest content with standing on the defensive, but go beyond and assume the offensive. That is to say that, if I would be morally certain of not making any concession to pride and sensuality, I must deny myself and act contrary to nature—go a little further than what is strictly necessary and commanded. Thus, the difference between prudence and generosity is not in the object but in the measure and still more in the motive—pure and perfect charity in regard to Jesus Christ: God.

I ask myself: Am I always the man of sound judgment, whose guide is reason? Do I never withdraw in

detail the integral offering I have made of myself to counteract sensuality and pride? My sins answer for me: *for our iniquities are multiplied before thee and our sins have testified against us.* (Isa. lix. 12.)

III.—What does the heavenly King who calls ask of me? An uncommon offering and one of great price. In general, it is a relentless offensive against SELF—the proud, worldly and sensual SELF. In detail:—

(*a*) To act against SELF, sensual and pleasure-loving. Not only to forgo all pleasure, either excessive, dangerous or bad; but also many pleasures inoffensive and permitted. Also: not merely to accept with a good grace the privations, inconveniences and sufferings that God sends; not merely to overcome my indolence, cultivate self-restraint and remedy my defects of modesty; but voluntarily impose on myself an appreciable amount of inconvenience and little bodily sufferings—provided always that obedience consents and the free exercise of natural activity—apostolic or otherwise—is not impaired, nor peace of mind compromised.

(*b*) To act against SELF, proud or vain. Not only never to gratify my desire of approbation, not only to elevate and purify my intention; but, as far as I am free, to act against my self-love—and not to fly or even neglect any opportunity of doing so. Further: the proud SELF is independent, indocile. It will be too little then to forbid myself all exterior or interior rebellion against authority, every murmur—tacit but voluntary—and to submit to direction, whether spiritual, intellectual or administrative. Nor will it suffice that I do not scheme to avoid reprehension, or keep out of the way of those who have admonished or blamed me officially. On the contrary: I should approach them, in order that they may render me the service of admonishing me further. In fine, I should be beforehand with

obedience and direction, though it is bound to humiliate me ; and even that it may do so.

The proud SELF is over-sensitive, irritable. Will it be enough that I do not voluntarily yield to irritation, rancour, sadness, discouragement, in case of some wound to my self-love ? No : far from sulking and avoiding those who may have humiliated me in one way or another, I should seek their company as occasion offers, not merely with the object of conquering my natural resentment, but that I may get to know them better when—as a rule—my resentment will die away.

And the proud SELF is inconsiderate, egoistical, jealous. I must counteract these tendencies by my efforts to be jealous of no one, never to exploit others for my own ends, nor alienate them either by contemptuous indifference or by stern, brusque or haughty behaviour. I ought always to be ready to yield the better part to others, and think it right and just that it should be theirs rather than my own.

In short, I should try to be among men such as our Lord was among His disciples : *as he that serveth* (Luke xxii. 27) ; and profess to have come into the world as He did : *not to be ministered unto, but to minister.* (Matt. xx. 28.)

CONCLUSION.—And now, to obtain the loyal renewal of my offering, the celestial King suggests two motives : honour ; love :—

(*a*) Honour. Behold Jesus Christ, our Lord and King, and before Him millions of souls, many of whom are as good as me and perhaps better. And it is me, the poor sinner, whom He now honours with a call to follow Him closely in this battle with the double concupiscence of pride and sensuality—a battle in which He is not concerned otherwise than by love for me. Shall I reply that others may have the honour, the obligations are too great for me to undertake ? But I have accepted

it already by the very fact of having become a priest or religious—by being a Catholic at all! Shall I declare that I am little or not at all sensible of this? No, I cannot do that. Well then, having accepted this honour, how do I regard it? in what do I conceive it to consist? In becoming a person of note within my Order and outside it by my talents and abilities? In being to-day a promising student and presently a distinguished professor or a preacher, renowned and quoted in the newspapers? None of these: the real honour of a priest, religious or Catholic lies in being as much priest, religious or Catholic as possible; as closely united to Jesus Christ, voluntarily humiliated, mortified and crucified, as possible. I have self-love: turn it to that. I would be conspicuous: let me be conspicuous in that. I thirst for glory: it is there for me—solid, eternal, the only glory worth having.

(*b*) But though honour fail to move me, there still remains another motive—love: the love that Jesus bears me and deigns to expect from me. What is there that He has not done for me? He has loaded me with benefits, pardoned my innumerable offences, and even set me an example, disinterested, heroic, bloody, in this war with concupiscence in which I alone am in peril. And how can I show my love for Him? By self-denial: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* (Luke ix. 23.) Deny himself daily: that is to say, renounce the proud, worldly and sensual SELF, His rival, not only His enemy but my own. And here—with due alteration of details—is my example:—David, fleeing before Absalom, wished to dismiss the brave Ethai—a stranger under no obligation to follow him. Ethai answered: *As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth: in what place soever thou shalt be, my lord, O king, either in death, or in life, there will thy servant be.* (2 Kings xv. 21.)

COLLOQUY.—Eternal Lord of all things, I make my oblation with Thy favour and help, in the presence of Thine infinite goodness, and in the sight of Thy glorious Mother and of all the saints of the heavenly court, protesting that I wish and desire, and that it is my deliberate determination—provided only it be to Thy greater service and praise—to imitate Thee in bearing all insults and reproaches, and all poverty—actual poverty as well as poverty of spirit—if only Thy divine Majesty be pleased to call and receive me to this life and state.

XIV

The Incarnation

Note.—As the points of this meditation embrace three distinct points of view, it seems more natural to give to each its own appropriate setting.

I.—The world after the Fall of Man, and without Jesus Christ. On the one hand, original sin developing all its logical effects; on the other, no Redemption yet decreed nor, consequently, the Incarnation. The outlook for mankind is dark indeed: hardly any hope of heaven; hell morally inevitable. Why? Because, for every one, it is extremely difficult, almost impossible, to overcome concupiscence, avoid sin actual and mortal, and so escape damnation; and thus it can only be that the vast majority of the human race verge upon hell. This is why St. Ignatius could say that, in general, men tend to *go to, descend into hell,* as by an inevitable propensity.

This being understood, we make a brief survey of the human race: all sons of Adam, and all bearing in their heart his sin. Infinite diversity of nationality, civilizations, conditions, talent, situations; but the same corruption, subservience to passion, materialism, spiritual blindness, pride—the same germ of eternal death.

What is it that these actors in the human drama say? At best their utterances are banal, more usually evil: *how can you speak good things, whereas you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* (Matt. xii. 34.)

And what is it they do, these men of earth? St. Ignatius says they mutually attack and kill one another. It is the struggle for existence put into practice: force, fraud, oppression—the elimination of the weak by the strong. What check on human greed and passion where Jesus Christ is not? And, to conceive the world without Him, let us contemplate the picture painted for us in Holy Scripture:—

There is no truth, and there is no mercy, and there is no knowledge of God in the land. (Osee iv. 1.) *The holy man is perished out of the earth . . . every one hunteth his brother to death. The evil of their hands they call good . . . a man's enemies are they of his own household.* (Mich. vii. 2, 3, 6.) *I saw the oppressions that are done under the sun and the tears of the innocent. . . . And I praised the dead rather than the living. And I judged him happier than them both that is not yet born, nor hath seen the evils that are done.* (Eccles. iv. 1-3.) And the writer goes on to ask whether life is worth the pain of living; a question many ask still and, among them, those to whom the world seems to refuse nothing. And yet, in those times as in our own, Jesus Christ in heaven was ever pleading for the world. What then would it have been without Him?

II.—Now let us go back to *the days of eternity*. (Mich. v. 2.) Nothing exists—neither heaven nor earth—but God alone, *who inhabiteth light inaccessible.* (1 Tim. vi. 16.) The Three Divine Persons reign in their august solitude, supremely beatific and self-sufficing; with nothing to gain by the existence of creatures, their voluntary homage or their eternal salvation.

And what do They see from eternity, in the time that does not yet exist but which is entirely present to Them? They see man, created by a first and gratuitous expansion of a love that would make others as happy as Themselves. By a second and even more gratuitous

expansion of the same love, man is elevated to a supernatural destiny. Then They behold man such as we have just beheld him; and the supernatural design, the execution of which it had pleased Them to leave in part to human liberty, frustrated. What shall They do on seeing this?

Shall They annihilate humanity, as unfaithful to its sole reason for existence? Why not? Throughout the centuries to come God hears blasphemers, who revile creation and loudly invoke oblivion.

Shall the Three Divine Persons leave events to take their natural course—abandon man to his concupiscence, his sin, to the hell that even now yawns for him? Here again: Why not? In ages as yet unborn, They know that many will refuse to believe that hell exists, and professedly Christian teachers will confidently assert that it is not eternal.

Or, shall They still remedy the evil by a third and supreme expansion of love, and one yet more admirable and gratuitous than the other two?

Yes: the resolution is taken:—"Let Us redeem the human race; rescue and reconquer that which belongs to Us, and very nearly everywhere refuses to conduct itself as though it did; let Us renovate fallen humanity in repairing the offence it has offered to Us."

Thus far the principle: but the method? Speaking absolutely, God could proportion the reparation to the natural powers of the offender, and be content with a finite satisfaction. But if it is to be adequate to the Majesty offended it must be infinite. Shall the Almighty show Himself more exacting than His sanctity requires Him to be? On the contrary, He shows Himself more generous than ever; for He gives to the guilty what He had withheld from the innocent: His own Son.

God freely willed the Redemption; willed to placate His infinite justice by a satisfaction of infinite value. Then, if He would satisfy, it was necessary for the

Redeemer to be inferior to God; while, to raise the satisfaction to an infinite value, He must be equal to God: God Himself. Thus it was decreed that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become Man. Thus was decreed Jesus Christ, the Man-God.

Man . . . God: what an abyss separates the two terms! Here the Creator; there the rational animal we call man. Well, they will be united in one Person; and there will be a Being unique, to whom will belong the illimitable perfections of God, together with the limitations and imperfections of the human species. God, by the mouth of His Prophet, represents Himself as seeking ineffectually for a man who should stay His avenging hand (Ezek. xxii. 30): and this man whom He had sought in vain He became Himself. *Behold the Man.* (John xix. 5.)

A prodigy of condescension this: God conceiving a marvel which rendered Him capable of descending to our level without ceasing to be Himself. More than that: Man has fallen from his primitive integrity, he is disgraced, demeaned; but nevertheless God comes to the world to induce it to return to Him. Would human imagination ever have dared to conceive the like?

Not only unheard of condescension, but the last and greatest expansion of love. To redeem the servant God delivers the Son. And to what? In the parable, the master sent his servants to claim his proprietary rights from the husbandmen. These having been cast out or killed, he sent his son: *They will reverence my son.* (Matt. xxi. 37.) God had no such illusion. He knew that, far from reverencing, men would reject and kill Him. And yet He sent Him, not only in spite of that but for that. On His part, the Son accepts, He offers Himself: *Then said I: Behold I come.* (Heb. x. 7.)

And, marvellous as was the first institution of human

dignity, its restoration was more marvellous still. And though we cannot see in it anything more than the reopening of heaven to Christians, at least let us recognize whose is the hand that opens it to us, and at what price. The triumph of love is to give one's life for those one loves : *greater love than this no man hath.* (John xv. 13.)

III.—The fulness of time is come and the eternal decree about to be fulfilled. We see a poor chamber in a Galilean village of small repute : *Can any thing of good come from Nazareth ?* (John i. 46.)

The persons : Gabriel, from the presence of God. (Luke i. 19.) He salutes and venerates, in all simplicity, the young Jewess who, the next moment, will be greater than himself. He adores the mystery, now to be accomplished, which, according to tradition, formed the object of his own trial in the past.

Next : Mary—the most beautiful soul in the world, after the one God is about to create. In the brief dialogue that ensues, she first evinces dread of praise, then concern for her virginity : this last satisfied, obedience. Humility has the first and last word, and both are connected by virginity.

Then Mary pronounces the *fiat* that heaven deigns to await. At that moment, the sacred Body of Jesus Christ is formed in her womb ; His most sacred Soul is created and united to it ; and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity descends and takes possession of both, and for ever. The Word is made flesh and commences to dwell amongst us.

Nothing greater and more wonderful has ever taken place, nor ever will. And, nevertheless, who knows of it ? No one. Joseph, the espoused, will only know it later, and after sore misgivings. (Matt. i. 19.) Presently Elizabeth will be enlightened by the Holy Ghost. In the first moments, Mary herself only knows

it by faith. For Elizabeth will proclaim : *Blessed art thou that hast believed.* (Luke i. 45.) The Word not only hides His glory, but He conceals the act of hiding it. *Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour.* (Isa. xlv. 15.) We may well recognize in Him the King of humility, for He enters the world—His own world—humbly, and thus already triumphs over pride.

Colloquy, thinking what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, or to the Eternal Word Incarnate, or to our Lady, His Mother ; making petition according to the needs I feel in myself, in order the better to follow and imitate our Lord, thus newly become incarnate : and say a *Pater Noster.*

XV

The Nativity

In this meditation, St. Ignatius would not have me content to remain—even in imagination—a mere passive spectator : he invites me to participate actively in the successive stages of the Mystery. This I will do in all simplicity, and leave the composition of place to form itself as events unfold themselves.

I.—So I close my eyes, and *immediately I am in the spirit.* (Apoc. iv. 2.) I am a young Jew and alone in the world. My living I gain by work when I can get it, by alms when it fails me. The present is the year of the edict of Cæsar Augustus (Luke ii. 1) ; every member of the house of David will wend his way to Bethlehem, so I make its neighbourhood the scene of my operations.

One fine evening I encounter a little party of two wayfarers. An elderly man, evidently an artisan but of honest and dignified bearing withal, leads an ass whereon rides a young woman heavily cloaked and veiled. I approach and ask alms. At a sign from the man the woman lifts her cloak to procure a small coin for me, when I see at a glance that she is about to become a mother. Her very look, so noble and high, entrances me. May I accompany them ? I ask. They look at one another inquiringly. Then : " Be it so, Joseph," she says. So then the man's name is Joseph. From a question addressed to his young wife by Joseph I gather that her name is Mary.

We arrive at Bethlehem and I conduct my new friends to the hospice. On the steps stands the landlord and, before we come to a halt, he has appraised us as unprofitable guests. "No room here," says he, brusquely. "But . . ." commences Joseph. "Try elsewhere," interrupts the man. *There was no room for them in the inn.* (Luke ii. 7.) What is to be done? Private houses are out of the question: all are, or will be full these days, when the descendants of David assemble from far and near. I have tears in my eyes and wrath in my heart; but the other two remain calm and unmoved. Then I venture: "I know a cave on the hillside hard by; a poor place enough but at least shelter: may I conduct you thither?" They consent: I lead the way: Joseph and Mary are now my guests.

Night has fallen when we reach the cave—a natural excavation used as a refuge for cattle during storms. Save for a rough manger it is entirely bare. I assist them to establish themselves—there is little enough to establish! While Joseph hangs his cloak across the back of the cave outside the manger to form an inner chamber, and makes a rude couch for Mary, I roam the hillside in search of fuel. Having lit a fire, I am invited to share their frugal meal, which concluded, I rise to depart and leave them in private. They detain me: I must not spend the night outside, they say. So I seat myself opposite Joseph in the outer cave, and reflect. Who *can* these two be? Then a light from heaven illuminates my soul. Why, this Joseph must be the *just man* (Matt. i. 19), the virgin spouse chosen to be the humble co-operator in this great Mystery. And Mary? She can be no other than the Virgin of virgins, about to become a mother by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Luke i. 35.) And the infant, who cannot delay his appearance much longer? None but HE: the desired of nations, foretold by our prophets, called by our ancestors the Messiah.

II.—My reflections are interrupted by Joseph who, pointing to the all-but-extinguished fire, asks me to procure fresh fuel. I search for some time outside and, when I return, there is a new arrival in the cave : a child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger. (Luke ii. 7.) On either side, Joseph and Mary on their knees in adoration. I let my burden fall and join them. For : *Who is this ?* (Matt. xxi. 10.) To all appearance, a new-born child, differing in no respect from others. But, in the light that God gives me, I see in Him *the Word made flesh* and come to dwell amongst us. (John i. 14.) This true Son of man by His Mother is the coeternal Son of God who, descending from heaven, is none the less in heaven. (John iii. 13.) He is at once Creator, Redeemer, Judge : *Christ, the Son of the Living God.* (Matt. xvi. 16.)

And this Word-child, says He aught ? No, for He wills to follow in everything the laws of the human nature He has assumed. He, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col. ii. 3), is content to remain mute. I consider therefore :—

Why did He come to earth ? Because He loved me from all eternity and, taking pity on me, would draw me to Himself. (Jer. xxxi. 3.) More : He came for me personally : *a child is born to us.* (Isa. ix. 6.) And further : He will remain with me to the end of the world (Matt. xxviii. 20.)—for eternity if I only wish it. Moreover, He is here to teach me : by example, *behold thy king cometh to thee, meek* (Matt. xxi. 5) ; by precept, *I that speak justice* (Isa. lxiii. 1), *thou hast the words of eternal life.* (John vi. 69.) Both to the end that I *may have life and more abundantly.* (John x. 10.) But to obtain that, I must needs be converted and become as the little Child He became Himself. (Matt. xviii. 3.)

And, does He do anything yet—He in that manger ? To the natural eye, nothing—what more helpless than a child ? But, *to the eyes of your heart enlightened*

(Eph. i. 18), it is far otherwise. Those little hands, bound about with swaddling bands, carry in them the world He created (Isa. xl. 12); and He sustains it and all creatures therein by His perpetual conservation. And this cave, this manger, the emperor who without knowing it sent Him here to be born—everything and every one, even His holy Mother who only exists and continues to exist by His concurrence—all are the works of His hand, in conjunction with the Father and the Holy Ghost, since He is God as They are.

Thus far in general. But, does He accomplish anything more special, more applicable to the present moment?

First of all, He prevails with God. This manger is already an altar on which commences the expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world: *God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.* (2 Cor. v. 19.) God would have an infinite reparation and, behold it already made, sufficient and complete. The mute appeal of the infant Jesus is of no less value than the Blood of Calvary. He could ascend to heaven now at once, and the Majesty of God would be satisfied and the human race redeemed.

Then He brings a lesson for me. The manger is the starting-point from which commenced *all things which Jesus began to do and to teach.* (Acts i. 1.) Here I learn disdain for all that fallen man esteems—ease, riches, fame; and esteem for all he disdains—suffering, poverty, obscurity. If the Eternal Wisdom chooses thus, what ought my choice to be?

Again: His advent in the guise of the poor child of a humble carpenter is in itself a rebuke to the pride and sensuality of the world: *Now is the judgment of the world.* (John xii. 31.) And not only a rebuke and a judgment, but a victory over them. Jesus is even now putting into practice what He promised in the meditation on the *Kingdom of Christ*—to be ever in

the forefront of the battle, and to ask no sacrifice from His subjects that He will not make Himself. Pride and sensuality combined form the mainspring of the world's action. They are only overcome by embracing their opposites: poverty, suffering and self-abasement; and in the manger of Bethlehem we behold all three. What can I refuse to the God who, for love of me, became so poor, so little, so insignificant? To put the matter at its lowest: does not my interest itself impel me to imitate Him? for, *if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* (2 Tim. ii. 12.)

Thus everywhere: what an abyss between divine realities and human fallacies! Even from His manger the infant Jesus teaches, judges, combats, triumphs: He glorifies His Father, He saves the world, He re-establishes peace between God and man.

III.—And now the choir of angels give their testimony to the divinity of this infant lying in the manger. First they glorify God. For behold come to earth the King of adorers, the only one capable of rendering to the divine Majesty the meed of praise that is His due.

Then they proclaim peace: peace between God and man; peace between man and man; peace, each one with himself. He has come, who, by His assumption of human nature, will break down all the ancient barriers. Not only will He reconcile heaven and earth, Jew and Gentile, by His Blood; but He does so already by the offering He makes of Himself: *Because in him, it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, making peace through the blood of his cross, both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven.* (Col. i. 19-20.)

On earth peace to men of good will. (Luke ii. 14.) In Jesus Christ the divine favour is regained for us. It is offered to all without exception, since He is born for all,

as He will die for all. But those alone will benefit who accept and respond to the divine benevolence by their own personal good will.

COLLOQUY.—St. Ignatius refers us to the colloquy of the *Incarnation*, leaving us free to address this or that Person of whom the Mystery treats. So we might conclude the present meditation thus :—

O child Jesus, I have been in imagination a poor, unworthy servant assisting at your advent to this world. Nor is this unreal : I am poor—having nothing I have not received ; unworthy—since I have neglected or misused the graces that have been vouchsafed to me. I am, and ever must be an unprofitable servant—for I can never render you the service you have a right to expect from me. Acknowledging this truth, may I endeavour to act upon it henceforth ! May I become humble in thought, word and deed ; and thus become ever so little like you ! May I follow, strive and triumph with you, who, from the manger, vanquished sensuality and pride. Virgin Mother, ask of your divine Son that I may have courage at least to try to do this. Child Jesus, ask it for me from the hand of your heavenly Father ! Heavenly Father, grant it to me at the intercession of Mary, and by the poverty and humility of Jesus Christ, newly born into this world.

XVI

Nazareth
(First Meditation)

The life of the Master at Nazareth is exactly the type of that of any one preparing for the priesthood or entering upon religious life. Not only that, but the spirit of Nazareth should continue in us throughout our subsequent career.

The Facts in Brief.—From the age of twelve till past thirty Jesus leads a life of submission, work and obscurity in a humble village.

First Prelude: the scene. A one-storeyed eastern house of the humbler sort: two or three scantily furnished rooms; a flat roof used for prayer. (Acts x. 9.) Hard by, a shed serving for a workshop.

Second Prelude.—I will ask that I may know the child, the youth, the workman of Nazareth better, to the end that I may endeavour to imitate Him more closely.

I.—Life at Nazareth, life of submission—*He . . . was subject to them* (Luke ii. 51): the only positive statement in the Gospel concerning the life of Jesus at Nazareth. Here the order of personal excellence is reversed. Joseph, the least perfect of the three, is constituted the head of the family; Mary, the immaculate Virgin, becomes the devoted wife and mother;

Jesus, the Son of God, takes His place as last and least —first the child who must be trained and guided, then the dutiful and obedient son.

And I ? Shall I complain if I am relegated to the lowest place in my community ? O Jesus, is not that to esteem myself more worthy than you ? Shall I console myself inwardly by thinking that, if right were done, my place would not be the last one ? May I be spared from such presumption !

Jesus' position of child necessarily implies dependence. He is the one to whom it is said : *Do this, and he doeth it.* (Matt. viii. 9.) Though by nature one with the Father (John x. 30), as man, the Father is greater than He. (John xiv. 28.) In placing Him as a child in the Holy Family the heavenly Father has delegated His rights over Him to Joseph and Mary. Consequently He sees the will of God in every command of theirs : *I do always the things that please him.* (John viii. 29.)

But, supposing that Joseph in his trade or Mary in her domestic affairs, one or both, do not always manage to the best advantage—make mistakes in fact—and Jesus is involved in the innocent error, perhaps even helps to carry it out ? Well, He of course knows that the opportune thing has not been done ; but He also sees His heavenly Father who permitted it, and wishes that His Son should share in it materially by His obedience : *Yea, Father : for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.* (Matt. xi. 26.)

Herein I find a lesson for myself. All authority belongs to God, because *he made us. . . . We are his people.* (Ps. xcix. 3-4.) And, on occasions, He delegates it to men of His choice. Obedience is submission of heart and mind to lawful authority—whether exercised by God Himself, as in the Ten Commandments ; or by the voice of superiors acting in His name. To do the will of man, as man, because one must, or because one fears or loves, is policy, necessity or affection, but not

obedience. Jesus had no need of His parents, still less was He afraid of them. He loved them assuredly, but that was not His motive for submission. He obeyed them because in their persons He saw His heavenly Father. And when, at twelve years of age, He left them for three days and explained that He had been about His Father's business (Luke ii. 49), it was to make them understand that: since all authority is of God, He can withdraw it even from those to whom He has once delegated it, whenever it seems good to Him to do so. Authority: exclusive prerogative of God. Obedience to that authority, direct or indirect: sole duty of man—two ideas fast becoming extinct in the world. By His submission and obedience Jesus gains a great victory over the spirit of independence and desire of pre-eminence—the most formidable form of pride. Do I say that the conditions between Him and I are unequal? Materially, that is true; but the lesson loses none of its force.

It is true. Jesus has no need of faith to recognize His Father in Joseph and Mary. He sees Him—Him in whom I have to believe. But, since that which He sees is necessarily the truth, my faith becomes more assured. If His obedience shows that He recognizes God in His parents, why should I find any difficulty in recognizing God in my superiors? True again, that Jesus had no pride to contend with, like I have. So much the greater wonder that He should have conducted Himself as though He had need of obedience to subdue pride in Himself! Once more: the obedience at Nazareth had nothing bitter or painful about it. Have I the heart to take exception to that? Then, wait awhile! The time will come when obedience will mean sacrifice real and sensible: the death of the Cross.

How do I obey? Do I obey as Jesus did? Or, do I criticize my superiors, who are to me as Joseph and

Mary were to Jesus? criticize them at home and, worse still, abroad; question their actions and even their capacity to govern; compensating myself for my material obedience by inward and voluntary rebellion? Let me kneel in spirit on the threshold of the holy house that saw Jesus obey; and there examine my thoughts, words and deeds in this matter; and may the Holy Ghost do the rest!

II.—Life at Nazareth, life of work. The second Adam executes upon His own Person the sentence passed upon His ancestor: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.* (Gen. iii. 19.) Child, we can see Him assisting His Mother in her household duties. Youth, He becomes apprentice to Joseph and learns his trade. Young man, He works as assistant; then—as we may suppose—Joseph, who feels the weight of advancing years, retires. And from that day forward, the customers deal with Jesus the carpenter, son and successor of Joseph the carpenter.

And I? Do I conceive an aversion for work, and seek to avoid it?

So the God-Man worked with His hands. No artist was He, nor even a highly technical artisan—just an ordinary workman: village carpenter and wheelwright, nothing more. This is the occupation the Father has chosen for His well beloved Son in which to pass years of His incomparably precious life. And I find some occupations unworthy of my talents! I complain because I am kept too long at them!

And how does Jesus work? Can we imagine Him an idle, indifferent workman, taking no interest in His work and only intent on getting it done—somehow? Blasphemy! On the contrary, at Nazareth as elsewhere, it must have been said of Him: *He hath done all things well.* (Mark vii. 37.) And thus we behold the finest human intellect that ever left the hands of the

Creator engaged in repairing household furniture and putting agricultural implements in order. My lesson again! Let me examine myself, judge myself and make my resolutions.

That the divine Workman works thus perfectly arises from the spirit that animates Him. Jesus is an excellent carpenter because He sees in that employment the will of His Father. He would have made an equally good farm-labourer or shepherd, if His Father had given Him the fields to cultivate or flocks to guard. The precise nature of the work is beside the question; it is the will of God that signifies. Jesus is the super-eminent model of indifference because He is the super-eminent model of self-abnegation. Being true Man He had naturally the tastes and preferences of a man. Can we think of Him as insensible to the natural satisfaction of turning out good work, of being known as a first-rate craftsman? By no means! He feels then the gratification arising from duty well and faithfully carried out, just as He appreciates the frugal meals prepared for Him by His Mother, and just as I can appreciate the pleasure of being a passable student, preacher or missionary. But for Jesus this pleasure was a mere accessory—lost in the much greater pleasure of doing the divine will. May it be no more than an accessory for me too! When a man finds himself absorbed in his work, either for its own sake or for the sake of his personal reputation alone, then it is becoming dangerous.

III.—Life at Nazareth, life of obscurity. Up to the age of thirty Jesus wills to be unknown to every one outside Nazareth—and very little known there, not perfectly understood by Joseph and Mary even: *Verily thou art a hidden God.* (Isa. xlv. 15.) Strange proportion! Thirty years' silence, three years to teach. There is no difficulty in understanding, say, the first twenty years.

Having deigned to be born of a woman, the incarnate Word deigns also to follow the natural laws of human growth. It is quite consistent with His habitual humility that He should not have shown Himself an "infant prodigy;" and if He did so once, among the doctors in the Temple, it was only an isolated incident —and one with a purpose, as we have already seen. But from twenty to thirty, what did He do? Let us forget all that went before and concentrate on those ten years. How fruitful they could have been! Between twenty and thirty men have won battles and administered States. Ten years! Why, St. Francis Xavier and St. John Francis Regis had no more for their apostolate; and what did they not do! What then would the Master Himself not have done! For centuries have men called for the Redeemer: now He has come; but why, oh! why delay to work like this? And those words — words which all will proclaim incomparable: *never did man speak like this man* (John vii. 46); those treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are in Him; all the resources and energies of the finest human intellect possessed and sustained by the personality of a God: the whole remains barren and sterile. Is not this to hide a light under a bushel indeed, to bury the talent received?

Jesus suffers from it at times: and why not? He aspires to direct action on souls, and the baptism of blood that shall render it fruitful: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized. And how am I straitened until it be accomplished?* (Luke xii. 50.) What more probable than this holy impatience of the Sacred Heart? No matter! The Father has not yet given the signal: *my hour is not yet come* (John ii. 4); and Jesus waits in peace.

Here then is the practical lesson of Nazareth. Jesus came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Now, if I listen to Nature, she will tell me that Jesus

delayed His entry upon His life's work too long—*Manifest thyself to the world*, said His brethren. (John vii. 4.) But if I attend to the supernatural Wisdom I see at the carpenter's bench at Nazareth, He will bear witness to several truths at once, viz., that the value of work is not in the object but in the intention ; that we must wait God's time and not think of serving Him but when and how He would be served ; that a nail driven or a plank planed by obedience is of more value than a learned work written, or an eloquent discourse delivered from personal caprice.

Above all : He teaches me to curb my impatience to be " up and doing," and especially my anxiety to appear in public, to become known and be talked about. He teaches me to bear—to cherish even—the prolonged obscurity that the preparation for my life's work requires, the monotony that my duty as a professor or master may entail, the seclusion that is mine as the pastor of some remote parish, little known and less thought of by the world outside.

Am I tempted to say : " Oh ! what great things I would do, had I but the free disposition of myself and could follow my bent ! " ? Then I should remember Nazareth and what it was that Jesus did there—especially for the last ten years or so. Do I dare to regard my studies, my class, my district in a poor neighbourhood, my confessional, my convent perhaps, as nothing more than a sepulchre in which I am buried ? Well, be it so : *for you are dead : and your life is hid with Christ in God.* (Col. iii. 3.) To have God for a sepulchre, and Jesus Christ for my model and companion in sepulture : should not that satisfy my faith and my heart ?

Do I think my work passes unrewarded because the world gives me no thanks—possibly doesn't even notice it ? But God sees it, I suppose, and *Thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.* (Matt. vi. 4.)

But my zeal chafes so! Did Jesus lack zeal at Nazareth; or rather, was His zeal really paralysed, really sterile? No: what causes us to suffer from obscurity, during our studies or afterwards, is not zeal, much less desire to please God: rather is it the impatience of nature—perhaps self-love under two forms; the desire to be a little less constrained and to appear a little more.

Now this is precisely what Jesus strove against at Nazareth. And He has abundant right to tell me—through the author of the *Imitation—Love to be unknown and esteemed as nothing* (I. ii. 3); for He spent at least ten years of His life on earth in preparing this lesson for me.

Colloquy.—It is natural to conclude with a triple colloquy: to Joseph, to Mary, and to Jesus Himself. As to the particular grace that should be asked, that must depend on the needs or devotion of each one.

XVII

Nazareth
(Second Meditation)

In this meditation we further consider the life of the Master at Nazareth : how it was a life of progress, and must have been one of charity and prayer.

First Prelude : The scene. The Holy House, as in the previous meditation.

Second Prelude.—I will ask that I may know the child, the youth, the workman of Nazareth, better, to the end that I may imitate Him more closely.

I.—Life at Nazareth, life of progress. *And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men.* (Luke ii. 52.)

Jesus advanced . . . in age. This is quite what we might have expected. Since He had come to earth as a child, He willed to be subject in all things to the natural laws of physical development.

He also advanced in wisdom before men. From the moment of the Incarnation He was the one *in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Col. ii. 3) ; but they only became apparent later. For example : At the age of twelve among the doctors in the Temple, *all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers.* (Luke ii. 47.) When He was about thirty, and had returned to Nazareth : *How came this man by all these things ? . . . Is not this the carpenter ?* (Mark

vi. 3.) Later, at Capharnaum: *They were astonished at his doctrine: for his speech was with power.* (Luke iv. 32.)

But how conceive Him advancing in wisdom and grace before God? Was His human soul capable of becoming wiser and more holy? Yes and No. No, as to its essential perfection: yes by the exercise of its natural faculties and the acquisition of merit. The All Perfect, who is Wisdom itself, progressed in His human intellect; not by acquiring fresh lights, but a different manner of knowing—direct experience, such as every human soul gains through the senses.

What then did Jesus learn in this manner?

Obedience: not to obey—no need to learn that; but what obedience costs, especially when the intellect that obeys is of a higher order than that which commands: *And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.* (Heb. v. 8.)

Compassion, in the strict human sense of the word: the pity that suffers *with* the sufferer—impossible to God: *for we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.* (Heb. iv. 15.) Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. *The Jews therefore said: Behold how he loved him.* (John xi. 35-36.)

He learned mercy—always in the same sense: the kindness that can be moved and melt into tenderness, which does not accord with the divine impassibility: *It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become merciful.* (Heb. ii. 17.) Again did Jesus weep over the impending doom of Jerusalem. (Luke xix. 41.)

In short, He learned by becoming *a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity.* (Isa. liii. 3.) A mystery; but still an undeniable reality! And how consoling for us! For we gain by the consciousness of being

understood : not by the omniscience of God, but by a Heart that is like our own and has suffered as we have.

But how was Jesus able to increase in grace before God ? Could that human soul which, by its personal union with the Word, was—from the very first and of necessity—holy, holy to God, advance in virtue and sanctity ? Again, Yes and No. No : there was no increase in sanctity. Yes : something was superadded to that incomparable foundation : the innumerable saintly actions of each day, the incalculable sum of merits accumulated—the treasury on which the Church draws to this day. If then, at all times, the Father was *well pleased* in Him (Matt. iii. 17), we can perfectly understand how the divine complacency increased with all that Jesus did to merit it.

And now, where am I in point of progress—not in age and intellect, but in soul ; in supernatural wisdom and in grace before God ? Am I what I was when I left the seminary or the novitiate ? Am I inclined to think, not without a comforting sense of satisfaction, that I am gaining experience ; that my intellect is ripening ; that I am no longer a child, but have become a man ? Let me beware ! there are two ways of being one. St. Paul said : *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child.* (1 Cor. xiii. 11.) But Jesus Christ Himself said : *Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. xviii. 3-4.) There is an infancy of mind, heart and character, which is ignorance, thoughtlessness, instability—childishness in fact—that can only be eliminated by *putting away the things of a child.* But there is an infancy, very holy and noble, which is perfectly consistent with increasing virility ;

an infancy of mind, heart and character, which is simplicity, docility, humility. And if one has lapsed from the ideal held up by our Lord, one must be converted and become as a child again. Childlike or childish : which am I ?

In my direct relations with God—my spiritual life. Am I more constant ; less naïvely mercenary, *i.e.*, less anxious for sensible pleasure in prayer, less inclined to estimate its value by that ; more equable in the go-and-come of consolations and desolations ? Then, thank God, *I have put away the things of a child.* On the contrary : am I less faithful to my prayer, preparation and so on ? *Before prayer prepare thy soul : and be not as a man that tempteth God.* (Ecclus. xviii. 23.) Have I become more falsely " broad-minded "—interior life and piety relegated to the second place, ousted by preoccupations of study or business ? Do I find that, without owning it, I have come to have less esteem for them in myself. Progress, but in the wrong direction. I must haste me to be converted and return to the simple fervour of olden days.

My relations with superiors. Can I accept advice or warning without resentment ? Can I receive a reprehension or a refusal of what I ask, and not be cast down, perhaps irritated ? If so, *I have put away the things of a child.* Conversely : am I less docile, more sensitive, suspicious and independent in temper ; more confident in my ability to direct myself—thinking that my age, my increasing wisdom, my trifle of experience give me some indefinable right to manage my own life in my own way ? Am I inclined to laugh at my former scruples, exactitude, etc., and, worse still, impress upon those younger than myself that " they will soon get out of all that " ? Then I must retrace my steps and become the child I once was.

With regard to those with whom I live. Am I less brusque, less thoughtless, less unaffectedly unconcerned

about them, their feelings, their joys and their sorrows ? So much gained over childishness ! But : am I wrapped up in myself and my doings, to the exclusion of everything else—in other words, have I become selfish and forgotten my whilom charity ? If so, I must be converted and become a child once more.

I am wont to plume myself on a certain amount of experience : what is it worth ? It is worth exactly as much as it makes me do. If it makes me less confident in, and more severe with myself and, consequently, more tolerant with others, this experience of mine has been sound, profitable. But if it has caused me to become consequential, presumptuous and difficult to manage ; maliciously clear-sighted about the defects of others and correspondingly sceptical concerning their virtues ; then it has been unprofitable and I must discard it and commence afresh.

To sum up. The entire question of my progress and acquired experience may be expressed in a sentence : Am I more humble than I was ? And that is to ask whether I have advanced towards that full and perfect virility of which Jesus at Nazareth was the adorable model : *the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.* (Eph. iv. 13.)

II.—Life at Nazareth, life of charity and, consequently, perfect example of what domestic and religious life should be. Here we have no scriptural details to guide us, we can only conjecture ; but that presents no difficulty—it is so very evident what it must have been.

In the Holy Family, none of the three thought of SELF ; each only thought of the other two—lived and sacrificed SELF for them. We see Joseph unceasingly solicitous for Mary and Jesus—how to provide for them, how best to promote their happiness. Then, Mary : how can she find time to think about SELF when she

has to be *careful . . . about many things* ? (Luke x. 41.) Always occupied, she lives but for God, her divine Son, and for her husband, whom she regards as given to her by God. And Jesus ? *Christ did not please himself.* (Rom. xv. 3.) *The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.* (Matt. xx. 28.) Nothing for Himself ; all for the glory of God by the service of others. Without dividing Himself, His Sacred Heart was entirely given to His twofold family—the celestial family, which is the Blessed Trinity Itself ; the terrestrial family, Mary and Joseph. Here was no egoism, no SELF ; and each one was only conscious of having a SELF in order to love the others and feel the happiness of giving SELF to them.

Why should it not be the same in a community ? At Nazareth, Jesus was the centre of unity ; so He is with us. He is ever present, and in two ways : morally by His special influence and assistance, thanks to our common religious profession : *where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. xviii. 20) ; physically, since there is, in every religious house, His special apartment with His eucharistic tabernacle. If we only realized that He is there, presiding over all we do ! What hinders us then from living together as they lived at Nazareth ? Lack of the supernatural spirit, the spirit of faith ; above all, individual egoism—the SELF we brought with us into religion, the SELF we have condemned in principle long ago, and whom it only remains for us to suppress in practice. SELF is the enemy in all its forms ; from the love of domination—father of rivalries, jealousies and contentions—to the unconscious retirement into ourselves, from which results indifference to others. To suppress SELF will require a constant effort of faith, courage and patience ; but our efforts will be well rewarded, in that our community life will become such as it ought to be : a paradise on earth—part of the

hundredfold promised to us in this life. It only depends on ourselves.

But Nazareth was not a cloister. Visitors came, the Holy Family went abroad—rarely no doubt and as little as possible, but sometimes. On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue ; for festivals of obligation they ascended to Jerusalem. Then there were relationships of family, friendship, business. As a child, Jesus had companions of His own age—maybe those whom the Gospel calls His brethren—assuredly others too. We can picture Him among them : His radiant purity ; His dignity, quite unassuming but nevertheless inspiring indefinable respect ; His complaisant manners ; above all, His kindness. In His games, as later in His conduct as a grown man, He was exactly such as St. Matthew (xii. 19), quoting from Isaias, describes Him : *He shall not contend nor cry out : neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.* Then we can hear Mary conversing as occasion offers with her friends and relations—and how ? Again : we see Joseph, and after him Jesus, and note their manner of doing business with wood-sellers or customers—abundant opportunity here for bearing with the defects of others ! And when we have called to mind the delight of the Holy Family at returning home after some absence—not from any narrow domestic spirit, but because they found it so good to be once more back in a pure and celestial atmosphere, among souls who understand and esteem one another and are one in God—we have considered the home life of the three most august Personages in the universe ; and have only to consider what we ought to do—each one of us—in order that the life in our community may more exactly resemble that of the little community at Nazareth.

III.—Life at Nazareth, life of prayer. Prayer is the first and immediate expression of the praise and

reverence due to God. Man is made to pray; the human world is the temple of prayer. There were doubtless some good and prayerful souls, both in Israel and among the Gentiles; but Nazareth was the sanctuary of perfect prayer. There, better than over the stone at Bethel (Gen. xxviii.), we might have beheld a luminous ladder; God at the summit, and the angels ascending to carry the prayers of His Son to Him, and thereafter descending to scatter graces in profusion upon a world which knew nothing of them. Ought not such a ladder to be erected over every religious house? Let us give the angels something to bear aloft to the Throne of Grace! At Nazareth, they must have prayed in common at certain fixed traditional hours: *seven times a day have I given praise to thee.* (Ps. cxviii. 164.) With what punctuality, recollection and fervour! This is the type of the exercises of piety consecrated by rule in religious houses. Also, without doubt, each member of the Holy Family prayed silently and continuously during the day. Joseph worked at his bench, Mary worked in the house; but can we conceive them otherwise than united with heaven by prayer?

Above all, we consider Jesus. Outwardly a child similar to other children, He deigned to be taught to pray with His lips. But inwardly, from the moment of His Incarnation, He never ceased to pray with His Heart: *we bught always to pray and not to faint.* (Luke xviii. 1.) Thus, as His manner was, He gave example before giving precept: *began to do and to teach.* (Acts i. 1.) He prayed then *without ceasing.* (1 Thess. v. 17.) And, if my work render the regular community prayers less easy or possible, the remedy is simple: pray always, as He did.

Colloquy to the Three Persons of the Holy Family, but more especially to Jesus; making such petition as my devotion inspires and my needs suggest.

XVIII

The Two Standards

The object of this meditation is to obtain a clearer insight into the rival strategies of heaven and hell in regard to souls. St. Ignatius, therefore, supposes an appeal to each individual to enlist under one or other of two standards: that of Jesus Christ or that of Lucifer. Consequently:—

In the first part I will ask that I may have a more intimate knowledge of the deceits of Satan and courage to baffle them—more especially as he will assail me at all my weak points at once.

In the second part I will ask for a more complete realization of the *true life* that Jesus Christ will show me and courage, not to fear but to embrace and live it.

First Part.—I behold a vast plain in the neighbourhood of Babylon, the city of pride, rebellion and confusion. There sits Satan on his throne, hideous and terrific of aspect, and surrounded by the demons who compose his court. He addresses his subjects in harsh, supercilious tones. They are to roam the world in search of recruits for the infernal standard. No place is to be left unattended, no single soul untempted. Nor am I forgotten: as I have my guardian angel, so I am to be provided with my attendant devil. His speech breathes hatred and contempt for the human race—unreasoning fools, who must be caught in his toils, chained, and become his here and hereafter. Thus, the arch-enemy of man.

The infernal strategy consists in tempting man by the allurement of riches, whence will follow desire for honour; the two combined will beget pride, and from that sin and ruin will ensue—as they hope. So far all is plain. But if sin—or its proximate disposition, pride—is presented to the intended victim at once, he may recoil. Therefore—and here is the perfidy—things pleasant to nature but not alarming to conscience: two objects, indifferent in themselves, riches and honour, must be employed. Man will be taken without suspecting it. Natural attraction will soon become inordinate affection, then absorbing passion, and thus the road to pride will open. The silken cords that delight him will become ropes, and these in turn chains: this effected, Satan can do as he pleases with him; and happy will he be if he recognizes his fetters in time to rid himself of them. And now we come to details:—

Wealth is no sin in itself. God made man to rule and exploit creation, and so enrich himself by his labour. Further: He sanctions and protects by law all fortune lawfully acquired or inherited. Wealth is morally indifferent—instrument for good or evil. But covetous and sensual human nature is ever in danger of excessive attachment to it, either for itself or for what it can purchase—pleasure, honour, power. *Woe to you that are rich*, said our Lord. (Luke vi. 24.) Why? Because wealth, agreeable to nature and indifferent in itself, may become a danger by reason of human concupiscence.

Nor is honour evil in itself: it may even make for the greatest good, *e.g.*, the influence and example of a good Catholic in high position. On occasions, one is bound to *take care of a good name* (Ecclus. xli. 15)—St. Ignatius himself furnishes a case in point. But, for the most part, honour is too strong a liquor for the weak heads of poor human beings: *Man when he was in honour did not understand: he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them.* (Ps. xlviii. 21.)

And the peril is concealed under pretext of offering us something pleasant to the taste and harmless in itself, in hopes that we may be overcome by it.

So, become rich and held in high esteem, SELF of the twofold concupiscence is well on his way to pride—the passion to be independent of men and things, while keeping them dependent on him. SELF will deny himself in nothing, endure no privation, far less resist the cravings of nature. SELF will expect submission and sacrifice from others, but will never subordinate his own interests to theirs. Contempt of God may follow —not formal perhaps, but practical: life lived without God. What powerful and privileged grace can a man expect who has gradually come to regard God as a negligible quantity, who no longer prays—at least with his heart; a man to whom such a grace would be unwelcome, as meaning loss of honour and pleasure, death to SELF? In such a case he is captured; morally speaking he is lost, and his loss commenced in two objects, each indifferent in itself.

Perhaps I may be inclined to say: I see the peril menacing people in the world and will not fail to warn them of it; but where is the danger for me—a religious, protected by vows of poverty and obedience? Have those vows already encompassed the death of my proud and sensual SELF—not in theory only but in practice? If not, I have just as much to fear from Satan and his strategy as those outside.

In religious life I have found a very fair equivalent —perhaps more—for the fortune, or chances of it, that I have relinquished. Superiors are large-minded, confiding; solicitous even, not only about absolute necessities but also for the reasonable comfort and relaxation of their subjects. This is all to the good.

But I may forget—and what more easy?—to keep guard over poor human nature, and thus hold in check the enemy who would have me under his standard.

And if I do forget, the normal situation is going to be a snare for me. I am a pauper by profession ; but I may gradually come to regard what is given me so liberally as a right—and perhaps the minimum of right, which I should like to enlarge a little—instead of alms. Or I may exploit my superior by asking for what is unnecessary, and even anticipate his permissions. In these and many other ways, only let SELF have his way and I shall insensibly become a very strange poor man —one who, without effort of his own, has more than is necessary, exacts it, and still complains of having too little. No : I am no more sheltered from the infernal strategy in religious life than elsewhere.

Am I more sheltered in the matter of honour ? Less still perhaps. Work well done—studies, instruction, preaching and so on—puts me in the way of becoming prominent and influential in my little circle of the moment, which for me may easily become the universe.

Now all this is so far from being an evil that I ought to do everything in my power to deserve it. The student should pray for the success of his studies ; the professor or priest ought to spare no pains to make his ministry fruitful for good. But, in all they do they must seek the glory of God, not the glorification of SELF. And this is what makes perfection more difficult, in a sense, to the man who has to " appear " (whether at home or abroad) than to the most austere of recluses. Why ? Because it requires such unfailing vigilance and courage to maintain myself in humility amid the gratifying hum of general appreciation. I can so easily come to overrate myself ; and then *the beloved grew fat and kicked* (Deut. xxxii. 15)—got so infatuated with popularity and adulation that he became arrogant, self-opinionated and disdainful. Thus SELF magnifies and may in time come to neglect God and even to set Him at nought. And this growth of SELF presents

certain characteristics, on which I ought to reflect very seriously :—

Imperceptible growth : small faults or negligences will, little by little, modify my habits, my dispositions even : with time I shall become another man.

Growth that no natural force can arrest, rather that time will accelerate. Each concession to nature, every capitulation to the strategy of Lucifer, will only draw the net closer, make the chain heavier.

The final stage of this growth is pride. Then comes some trial, a little out of the common. I may be called upon to retract some cherished opinion, alter my methods, possibly relinquish the office in which I have established my influence and effected much good. What is to happen then ? In that decisive moment, shall I be able and willing to suppress the SELF whom I have permitted to increase so greatly ? Have I the right to count on an exceptional grace in this extremity ? Can I flatter myself that, if matters come to this pass, I shall be able to force myself to submit, or that the grace of my vocation will save me ?

Thus, far from being secure, I have everything to fear from the tactics of Satan ; and, even for safety's sake, must hasten to co-operate with those of Jesus Christ at once and in good earnest.

SECOND PART.—The scene changes. Another great plain, but near Jerusalem, the city of peace. There, Jesus, the Captain-general of the good, is established. No stranger to our race, like Satan, is He ; but one of ourselves : *the firstborn amongst many brethren.* (Rom. viii. 29.) He comes to give us the more abundant life (John x. 10), *the true life,* as St. Ignatius calls it ; just as Satan, *murderer from the beginning* (John viii. 44), comes but *to kill and to destroy.* (John x. 10.) Here is no pomp, but all is simplicity—reminiscent of the scene at the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is indeed the

King of the *Kingdom*, not triumphant as yet, but warring. This last is the reason He shows Himself in field-dress, so to speak—ready to take the lead in that beneficent expedition of which we have heard already.

He is surrounded by a *little flock* (Luke xii. 32); small enough compared to the host that follows Satan, but still the nucleus of the *great multitude, which no man could number*, seen by St. John. (Apoc. vii. 9.)

He speaks, but in no harsh and supercilious tones. He evinces only benevolence both for His envoys and for those to whom He sends them. He asks good will to lead souls to Him by kindness and persuasion. Nets indeed are to be employed, for His agents are to be *fishers of men* (Mark i. 17); but they will only fish to save, not to destroy. Chains too: *the bands of love* (Osee xi. 4); but they will only serve to bind the baser parts of our nature, and draw us gently *into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.* (Rom. viii. 21.) Here is indeed the Heart *meek and humble* (Matt. xi. 29) —the Heart of the Captain-general, or, as Bossuet calls Him, the Captain-Saviour.

And the strategy, the aim? Nothing less than to bring about the death of the wicked SELF, and lead the other one to life eternal: to induce us to hate our life here in order to keep it in the hereafter. (John xii. 25.)

Whereunto then am I to lead souls and, first and foremost, my own? To humility: the truth about myself and, consequently, about my true relation to God and creatures; the habitual disposition to prefer God to myself, to sacrifice, renounce and deny myself—in short, to despise myself for love of God. To humility, not in one particular point but in everything—were I already humble I should refuse nothing to God. To humility of body as well as of soul, for, temperance and mortification imply contempt for the carnal SELF—they are the humility of the flesh, just as luxury is its pride.

Humility is the virtue that should be the aim of my life—from the point of departure, faith, to the goal of arrival, which is pure charity. Humility, *i.e.*, charity already commencing, already sufficient for practical abnegation and apt to increase indefinitely with this abnegation itself. This is the immediate objective of the divine strategy ; and there it is that I must arrive and establish myself if I am to advance in virtue, persevere, save my own soul and lead others to save theirs.

But how am I to attain to humility ? There is only one way : submit to humiliation. Humiliation of the flesh—the sensual SELF—by effective poverty, privations and macerations : humiliation of the spirit—the proud SELF—by accepting dependence, bearing with opposition ; better still, by patiently enduring opprobrium and contempt. Humiliation inflicted on self, humiliation accepted when sent by God, humiliation that one even asks Him to send. And all because heaven only opens to the humble, and one can only buy humility at the price of humiliation.

What ! Desire humiliations for myself : lead others to do so too ! But I have a horror of humiliation and so have they ! Well, have I not asked for them already in the colloquy of the *Kingdom of Christ* ?—but let us pursue the matter further :—

Such a course is in the highest interests of my soul and, after all, only spiritual common sense. Concupiscence always remains with us, despite baptism and vocation. We seek ease and comfort ; we delight in fame and popularity. Since then there is the ever-present danger of concupiscence turning things that are good in themselves to inordinate or evil ends, wisdom counsels us to have recourse, even preventatively, to the unique antidotes of poverty and humiliation. Suffering as we do from sensuality and self-love, we have need of effective poverty as a nauseous but

salutary remedy; of humiliation as an operation, painful but necessary to our recovery.

Then again: Who is it that prescribes such drastic treatment for me? None but He who, *having no need of a physician* (Mark ii. 17), underwent it Himself for love of me. And who is it that asks this slow and continuous amputation of my sensual and vainglorious SELF, except the One who, without a shadow of personal necessity and in order to give me example and courage, was loaded with opprobrium and drank of the chalice of humiliation to the dregs? Can I leave my King, my Captain-Saviour to suffer for me, and alone? Let me hasten then to enroll myself under His standard: *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* (John vi. 69.)

TRIPLE COLLOQUY.—To ask, through the intercession of Mary, channel of all graces; and through the merits of Jesus Christ, my one Mediator and Redeemer, that I may be enrolled under the royal standard. Officially I have enlisted long since: I live in camp; exteriorly I wear the uniform. But do I wear interiorly the robe with which my Master was clothed for me? May I be vested in it here and now, despite the outcries of nature!

To ask for courage to act spontaneously against my sensuality, my carnal and worldly self-love; and more especially that God will deign to help me against that greatest of all enemies of His glory and my own salvation—MYSELF.

And as it is but little to resign myself to the trifling inevitable humiliations of my daily life, I will ask that humiliations may come; that my self-love may be thwarted, wounded, kept in check, by opposition and even by failure—provided that the glory of God be in no way compromised thereby.

XIX

The Two Standards
(Apostolic Application)

(Note.—There are thirty-three meditations in the series, in order to allow for the possible omission of this one.)

It is undeniable that while Jesus Christ desires all men to fight the battle of life under His standard, Lucifer is equally anxious that they should do so under his. Thanks to God, Lucifer will not succeed; nor, alas! will Jesus Christ. The number that Jesus Christ will have depends in some measure on me—a sufficient matter for grave consideration.

Therefore I will ask for a clear realization of the fact that, if I am to rescue souls from the strategy of Satan, I must first put in practice the strategy of Jesus Christ in regard to my own. To withdraw them from love of riches, honour and the pride resulting from them, I must endeavour, by effective poverty and humiliation, to arrive at habitual humility. In default of this, I cannot expect that a fruitful and consoling apostolate will be mine.

First Part.—While the principle of this meditation will be identical with the last, we will modify the setting a little. We now picture Satan surrounded, not by demons but by men. This, because his endeavour is to conceal his ultimate designs and pose as the friend and liberator of humanity.

For this purpose we imagine a meeting of some Infidel Society, comprising representatives of every class and station in life : leaders of " thought," leaders of " the masses," free livers and free thinkers—all complete dupes of Satan, ready and eager to do his work without knowing or willing it—for we exclude, by hypothesis, any direct desire to deal with the devil as such.

The routine business having been disposed of, the Chairman asks permission to introduce a visitor, who, however, desires that his name shall not be made public. Their guest, who, as he understands, has travelled in many climes and accumulated a vast experience of men and matters, will honour the meeting with an address. The stranger appears as a man of imposing stature and attractive personality, but wears an air at once unquiet and disquieting. It is He Himself, no doubt about it ! The following is a resumé of his address :—

Referring with gratification to the presence of such a distinguished gathering of pioneers of modern thought, his object would be to aid them in the work they had so well begun. Their great ideal, of course, was the complete elimination of the influence of God and the supernatural from the heart of mankind. To effect this they must first deal with obstacles. Of these, the first was Christianity, and especially Catholic Christianity —the only living and formidable form, the supreme incarnation of the idea of God. Here, they must restrain their just impatience and not go further than the ground was prepared. For the present then, they must be content to minimize the influence of the Church, hinder her ministrations, cut off—confiscate if possible—her resources. As to the future, let them obtain control of education and, by forbidding the teaching of religion in their schools, ensure that, at one and the same time, the rising generation should have

no knowledge of God and the priesthood, thus deprived of its recruiting-ground, should become extinct.

But they must not halt at externals ; there was the soul to be considered. A new mentality must be established, from which would issue a new morality. The main features of this were Pleasure and Self-esteem. When men came to regard these as the supreme object in life, they would gradually come to live as though there were no God which, for all practical purposes, would be equivalent to denying Him altogether.

True pleasure consisted in the unrestrained enjoyment of the good things—everything that human nature hankered after—of this life. What was it that kept this instinct in check ? Surely nothing but the dream of One on high, the hope or menace of another state of existence after death. Then let them make this life so delightful that man would never wish for another, so complicated and tumultuous that he would have no time to think about anything beyond it. And since pleasure was to be purchased by gold, man's cupidity must be excited ; he must be led to esteem money the only thing worth having, either as a means or an end. Those among them who were writers should glorify unrestricted amusement and the wealth that could procure it. Thus they would accustom man to find his paradise here, and so cease to concern himself about one hereafter.

As for self-esteem, well, in the case of one rich enough to gratify his every desire it would come of itself—he would be quick to recognize his personal value. In those capable of it—ah ! but who was not ?—ambition must be roused and fomented : ambition to appear, to rise, to rule, were it in the State or simply in their native village. To the remainder equality should be promised and they must be urged to crave for independence : of thought, of speech, of action ; independence,

not only of all human authority but of the God to whom a now-discarded superstition ascribed their creation.

Thus man, being freed from the time-worn shackles of morality, rectitude and duty, would be at liberty to exert his powers to the full, without being dependent on any but himself. This was the goal to which they must lead him. Many would follow without knowing whither they were being led. That mattered not: it would suffice that their guides, the men of the new light and leading, should understand.

Then let them press forward vigorously on their high mission for the emancipation of the human race—on the successful outcome of which it would be a delight to him to be the first to offer them his heartfelt congratulations.

The unknown ceases to speak and, under cover of the applause, is heard to murmur: "Wretched dupes! Lead others! Why, you don't know where you're going yourselves! Were I addressing a gathering of another kind, I should have called these things the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life. They will lead you, poor blind leaders of the blind, to hell; where your unending despair will be my eternal revenge on God!"

It may be that after reading this discourse of the unknown—which is but an elaboration of the recorded utterances of Satan and his adherents—the thought will occur: How much better is Satan served by his emissaries than Christ by His apostles! But we must beware of exaggeration here: the conditions are not identical. The former do not recognize their master: to serve him they have only to let nature have its way; to adore him they have but to adore themselves. Rather, put the question in this way: Has faith in, and love of Jesus Christ less power with me than interest and self-love with people of the world? If so,

why? On account of my weaknesses, my habitual unfaithfulness, my too numerous concessions to the enemy with whom I ought to wage a truceless war—my pride and love of pleasure among others. These are the things that cause faith and zeal to languish in me. It is because of them that I am such a lukewarm apostle; while Satan's emissaries have no difficulty in being all fire and earnestness. O Jesus, your great servant, Francis Xavier, was indignant at the thought of not going to such extremes for your glory as the merchants in search of fortune. Grant me something of that generous indignation; more faith, more love, above all, more courage for sacrifice; for it is sacrifice that augments both faith and love.

SECOND PART.—Here we will modify nothing of the setting given by St. Ignatius. We see the divine Chief in the same place and under the same conditions. He is surrounded by His chosen followers — including myself. Yes: by vocation and state I am one of those disciples whom our Lord sends to publish and propagate *the true life*—the life He lived and taught Himself.

Let me try to conceive the grandeur of my office. *To me, the least of all the saints, is given this grace, to preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ.* (Eph. iii. 8.) I am *to labour with the gospel, according to the power of God.* (2 Tim. i. 8.) Men ought to consider me *as of the ministers of Christ.* (1 Cor. iv. 1.) Who listens to me listens to Him. (Luke x. 16.) And since He and His Father are one (John x. 30), when Jesus Christ speaks by my mouth, the Father speaks at the same time: *For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us.* (2 Cor. v. 20.) Do I realize the sublimity of my vocation?—try to raise myself above material things and routine by the consideration that I am a standard-bearer of Jesus Christ?

Am I worthy of such an honour? How comes it

that Jesus Christ has taken me as an associate of His Apostles, of Himself, of His Father: *raising up the needy from the earth: and lifting up the poor out of the dunghill. That he may place him with princes: with the princes of his people.* (Ps. cxii. 7-8.)?

What a burden: what a responsibility! *Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?* (Exod. iii. 11.) More still: Who am I that I should brave the world and wrest captive souls from the grasp of its prince? Like Jeremias, *I cannot speak, for I am a child.* (Jer. i. 6)—powerless to stem the torrent of popular opinion glorifying riches, honour and pride. Do I, by any chance, count on my knowledge, abilities, eloquence, powers of persuasion? If so, I am the victim of the worst sort of delusion!

Yet my mission is certain and I have promised to carry it out. What have I to do then? I have to practise the virtues necessary to assure myself of heaven. I must attain those virtues by the practice of habitual humility and love of God carried to contempt of self. And to reach this habitual humility I must endure privations and humiliations. Such is the itinerary laid out for me by Jesus Christ who, without personal necessity and solely for love of souls, followed it Himself: *Whither I go you know: and the way you know.* (John xiv. 4.) That is the way I must take myself; that is the way by which I must *lead* souls, *i.e.*, go before them. If they are to become humble through my efforts I am bound to show myself humble even to excess. Jesus Christ was satiated with opprobrium and suffering: I ought to drink largely of the same in order to induce others to taste them in such measure as their salvation may require.

So I have to turn souls against themselves; induce them, from supernatural motives, to fly that for which they have a natural affection, and accept—seek even—

that of which they have a natural horror. A miracle this : can I work it ? Certainly not ! But by my state, by my office, I should be able to obtain it. And from whom ? From souls themselves ; from God on their behalf. And first of all, I must obtain it from myself and from God on my behalf.

How obtain it from souls ? By my own example. Without that, all—doctrine, eloquence, demonstrations, adjurations—will be so much pains wasted. Let me suppose myself, for example, a tepid, easy-going priest or religious who enjoys life in a modest way, with little desire and less practice of mortification, nursing a comfortable sense of self-satisfaction the while, and relegating the doctrine of the *Standards* to the realm of the ideal. What is to happen when I come in contact with souls ? Either I shall not venture to ask them for what our Lord expects of them or, if I do manage to ask, I shall be certain of not obtaining it. I shall reduce the teaching of Jesus Christ to high-flown generalities which, while they will disquiet no one, will not help them either. In a word : I shall have betrayed my commission. But it may come about that, on some occasion or other, I shall be forced to speak the entire truth. No need to consider myself a hypocrite in such a case for, though I have not asserted it hitherto, I have a right to speak. How will the new rendering of my message be received ? People are observant and they will compare : my life with my discourses ; the doctor with his doctrine. They will very soon perceive that their eloquent apostle of humility and mortification is hardly yet completely detached from his own ease and comfort, that he loves success unduly, that he is fond of praise and sometimes fishes for it, that he is over-sensitive and irritable in presence of criticism or opposition. And what conclusion will they draw ? Either that my teaching proceeds rather from my head than from my heart or that it is impracticable since I

practise it so little myself. No: if people feel that about me, if I am not in fact the humble man, become such by the habit of privation and humiliation accepted and even sought, how many recruits shall I enlist for the standard of Jesus Christ?

Powerless with souls, I shall be powerless with God, and from the same cause. For it is from Him that the special graces that turn a man against himself are to be obtained. And how, unless by prayer? But does the apostle who is not humble attach great importance to prayer? Preoccupied with thinking out his eloquent discourse, is he not inclined to overlook the force that should lie behind it: influence with God? And what would his prayer be? "My God, may these poor souls become such as I tell them to be and not such as I am myself." A poor prayer this, not evil in itself but of little efficacy. Why? What will give me real power with God? Merit, sacrifice, the practical abnegation of SELF, that is to say, precisely that humiliation I have not the courage to desire nor even to accept with a good grace.

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John xii. 24, 25.) When the SELF of nature, the SELF of sense and self-love shall be rooted out, rejected by the SELF of vocation and of grace; when it can be trampled upon by any one at will, when it is buried like the grain of wheat: then only will souls spring up for God, soldiers appear for the standard of Jesus Christ. God will say of me, as of Christ Himself: *Therefore will I distribute to him very many . . . because he hath delivered his soul unto death.* (Isa. liii. 12.) Souls live by the death of the apostle: *death worketh in us: but life in you.* (2 Cor. iv. 12.) Souls that God knows, that He destines for me and will put in my way, will live to Him if I die to myself. They are in danger of perishing, or at least

of languishing if I refuse this death or only half resolve upon it.

Shall I lose heart at all this? That were cowardice, ingratitude! Let me rather conclude with an act of confidence, faith and supernatural courage. Though this mission far exceed my natural powers as a man, it is certain and there is always the grace of my state. He is wise, He is good, He is faithful and consistent with Himself, the God who has called me, not only to the great company of the baptized but to the perfect life, the life apostolic. He will ever be faithful and has done me the honour of counting on my being faithful too. And the proof of this last is that He has established me in the apostolic calling. He has believed me capable of it with His grace and so I am, since His grace will never fail me: *I give him thanks who hath strengthened me* (and who will strengthen me), *even to Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he hath counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry.* (1 Tim. i. 12.) It remains for me never to betray His confidence, but rather to respond to it by my own; to embrace afresh, loyally, faithfully and lovingly the indispensable condition of the ministry: humility acquired by privations and humiliations.

Triple Colloquy.—I have much need of privations and humiliations as a corrective for myself; and I have already asked for them out of love and gratitude for Him who willed to accept them so generously. Let me ask for them once again, in view of my future apostolate. Most holy Virgin, obtain for me; Lord Jesus, heavenly Father, grant me, in spite of my natural repugnance, all that may be necessary to become a good standard-bearer, a good recruiting-officer in the service of the great King.

XX

The Public Life of Our Lord

(1) Zeal in itself and as it was in Jesus Christ

In an annual retreat it is impossible to consider the events in the Public Life of our Lord point by point, nor is any principle apparent on which certain of them should be selected. It will be sufficient, therefore, to meditate upon the force that underlay them all: zeal.

First Prelude.—The general history of the facts: that at about the age of thirty our divine Lord left Nazareth and devoted three years to external work.

For a composition of place, we can either call to mind the towns, villages, etc., where He preached—as in the meditation on the *Kingdom of Christ*; or the house at Nazareth and Jesus taking farewell of Mary; or the Well of Jacob, near Sichar, and Jesus sitting, waiting for the woman of Samaria.

Second Prelude.—I will ask for a clearer knowledge of Jesus Christ as prototype of apostles and, as such, that I may ever love Him better both from sympathy and gratitude; and faithfully imitate and follow Him in this apostolic function—the second duty of my state.

Zeal has a twofold aspect: first and chiefly towards God; secondly and consequently towards souls.

As far as it refers to God, zeal implies three things: justice, charity and jealousy. Justice prescribes that

He shall be rendered the homage and service which are His due, that the order established by Him shall be maintained and His truth vindicated. Consequently, if I am zealous I am grieved and indignant to see Him ignored, badly served or denied.

Charity, the highest and purest love for God. He is all-loving and all-lovable: and my zeal impels me to wish that men loved Him and to be distressed to find they do not do so.

Jealousy—the true inwardness of the word "zeal"—can only be verified in regard to God. Whoso is jealous in this sense is jealous, not *of* God like Lucifer, but *for* God like St. Michael: *Quis ut Deus? I, the Lord: . . . I will not give my glory to another.* (Isa. xlii. 8.) If I am zealous, neither will I permit or connive at it.

But inasmuch as it regards souls, zeal is all-embracing benevolence. It desires happiness and salvation for all and is horror-stricken at the thought of eternal death for any one. The zealous man is the best and only real friend humanity possesses.

And since zeal is love, it necessarily excludes indifference, inertia, parsimony of effort, egoism under every form. It cannot be conceived, much less exist, without a proportionate abnegation of SELF. In its perfection it is love of God carried to contempt of self.

Zeal as it was in Jesus Christ. Zeal was His reason for existence. Why a Word incarnate, a God-Man? For the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He had announced it by the mouth of His Prophet in ages past: *I, that speak justice and am a defender to save.* (Isa. lxiii. 1.) The angelic choir attested it round His cradle: *Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will.* (Luke ii. 14.) He Himself confirmed it: *For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth.* (John xviii. 37.)

And since truth, justice and order are, in foundation and substance, nothing less than God Himself; zeal for God requires that He must be known, confessed and glorified on earth. Jesus came for that, existed for that: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me.* (John vi. 38.) And not only to glorify God but to save mankind: *For God sent not his Son into the world, to judge the world: but that the world may be saved by him.* (John iii. 17.)

To glorify God and save souls: that is the reason for Jesus Christ. It was His vocation as Man, His mission, His mandate—a mandate proposed by the divine will and freely accepted by the human will of the Son. It was the first and last word of His life on earth: *Behold I come . . . that I should do thy will, O God* (Heb. x. 7); *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* (John xvii. 4.) He came to redeem the world by His death: but what was His death if not the last act of His zeal, His last effort to glorify God and save us? *I lay down my life for my sheep . . . therefore doth the Father love me: because I lay down my life. . . . This commandment have I received of my Father.* (John x. 15, 17, 18.) Thus Jesus Christ, in His triple function of preacher, ransom and victim, was wholly consumed by zeal. Thus did God make and anoint Him Prince and Prototype of those who devote and deliver up their life for the divine glory and the salvation of the human race.

And I? Is not zeal a necessity for me—if not by nature at least by baptism? Even as a man could I be indifferent to the honour of God and the eternal destiny of those like me? As a Christian could I dare suppose myself dispensed from zeal and say the Lord's Prayer thus: " . . . hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done—but by me and for me alone. As for others, they are no concern of mine, either in respect of Yourself or their souls." ?

But I am a priest, a religious perhaps. God has called me to His special service, I have accepted His summons, and thenceforth zeal became a positive law for me, and zeal for souls my second professional end —the other half of my reason for being what I am. My mission is nothing but a continuation of that of Jesus Christ, my Master ; my mandate nothing less than an amplification of His. Like Jesus Christ, zeal claims me for its own and I am strictly bound to it—not from free devotion by which to glorify myself, but from professional necessity : *For if I preach the gospel, it is no glory to me : for a necessity lieth upon me. For woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.* (1 Cor. ix. 16.) Like Jesus Christ, I belong to zeal ; without other limit than that of my life ; without other measure than His will manifested by circumstances or obedience. I ought then, like Him, to employ myself, exhaust myself in the service of God and of souls. That is what our divine Lord did and what His Apostle, St. Paul, inspired by His example, could undertake to do : *I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls.* (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

A glorious vocation, truly ! May Jesus Christ give me grace to see it through His eyes ; to love it with His Sacred Heart !

Who can ever love the truth as He loves it ? As God He is the source of it ; as Man He is personally one with it : *I am . . . the truth.* (John xiv. 6.) To love it is but to love Himself in all justice and without a shadow of egoism, since He only loves it in order to give Himself and the truth at the same time.

Jesus is also and necessarily the first of those blessed ones that *hunger and thirst after justice.* (Matt. v. 6.) *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* (John iv. 34.) But He has hunger and thirst for souls—for want of them too, alas ! *Give me to drink,* said He to the

Samaritan woman at the opening of His ministry (John iv. 7) ; and at the close of it : *I thirst.* (John xix. 28.)

Then truth and justice are not abstractions ; they are things existent and personal ; in essence and plenitude they are God Himself. Who then can love God like the human Heart of Jesus ? He alone knows the Father perfectly : *No man knoweth . . . who the Father is, but the Son.* (Luke x. 22.) He alone knows how lovable and loving the Father is, for, is He not the living proof of both ? *If thou didst know the gift of God,* said He to the Samaritan woman, once more. (John iv. 10.) He knows it because He is both the incarnation of the divine amiability and the supreme gift that exhausts the divine love : *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son.* (John iii. 16.) Then how He must love God ! How He burns to see Him loved !

Does He love souls ? Yes, without doubt ; since He took one Himself to get nearer to and save them ; because He knows their value in the sight of God. And what price was He ready to pay for them ? Himself : His Blood shed for them—supreme token of the Father's love and His own : *He spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things ?* (Rom. viii. 32.) *I lay down my life for my sheep.* (John x. 15.)

Love of truth and justice ; love of God and souls : there is zeal in all its perfection—the ruling passion that moves all others in the human heart. And Jesus had a true human heart—as capable of all natural emotions as my own. But He was their master, not the slave I sometimes become. What then was there in this human heart of His ?

Desire of the eternal salvation of souls : *Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me.* (John xvii. 24.)

Ardour : holy impatience, avowed but restrained : *I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I,*

but that it be kindled? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized. And how am I straitened until it be accomplished? (Luke xii. 49, 50.)

Horror at the outrage done to God by sin: *I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away.* (Ps. cxviii. 158.) Righteous indignation at sin: *I have hated and abhorred iniquity.* (163.) Hatred for the sinner as such, enemy of God and persisting in being so: *I have hated the unjust.* (113.)

Anguish at the peril of souls. St. Paul could say: *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?* (2 Cor. xi. 29): how much more Jesus Christ!

Sorrow at the love of God unappreciated, over souls that will their own ruin: *My eyes have sent forth springs of water: because they have not kept thy law.* (Ps. cxviii. 136.) Can we suppose He only wept over Jerusalem once, over the Jewish people, over the world, over every Lazarus enshrouded in spiritual death, depriving themselves of resurrection?

Terror at the thought of the judgments of God: *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Heb. x. 31.) One day, sovereign judge of the living and the dead, this same Jesus will pronounce upon sinners the sentence to which they have compelled Him: to-day, mortal and passible, He trembles for them.

And, very rarely, joy—joy evoked by simple faith: *Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel* (Matt. viii. 10); *O woman, great is thy faith.* (Matt. xv. 28.) But above all by the action of God in blinding the proud and revealing Himself to the humble: *In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Ghost and said: I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones.* (Luke x. 21.)

Nor is there anything forced or conjectural in ascribing all these varied emotions to the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord. Some of them are actually recorded of Him in Holy Scripture. For the rest: if the servants could feel thus concerning sin and sinners, how much more the Master! The total effect of them all is perfect charity—love of God and of souls which, dominating and unifying all else, produced in Jesus Christ both absolute purity of zeal and His incomparable power, since it concentrated all the faculties and resources of the finest human nature that ever existed on one single object. The charity of Jesus Christ urged directly to devotion, sacrifice, entire immolation. If He had had a human SELF, He would have contemned it magnificently for love of God, of souls, for my love. At least He had a real human body and a real human soul: did He spend and immolate them sufficiently generously?

Here then we have a faint but accurate conception of the zeal that was in Him. And I, I whom St. Paul admonishes to make the sentiments of the Master my own: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* (Phil. ii. 5.) How do I find myself in this matter? Let me look into my poor heart and compare it with the Sacred Heart.

Am I zealous? Do I love truth and justice; God, and souls for Him? Do I find in myself all the holy incentives that flow from and bear witness to this love? Can it be that, in the depths of my soul, there would be found a sort of stifled resignation, a half-conscious indolence at the spectacle of faith that is vanishing, souls that are being lost, Jesus Christ ignored and repulsed, of the vast majority of the human race refusing to give glory to God?

Let me push this inquiry further. Is my zeal pure? In my desire—assuredly sincere—to work for good, does there not lurk a notable admixture of simple natural

activity, professional enthusiasm, interest for the body to which I belong and its concerns, of that spirit which naturally impels me to follow the career I have chosen and advance and succeed in it? A spirit quite legitimate, useful and enviable; but still, not being charity it is not zeal.

More than all: does my zeal amount to devotedness, sacrifice already commenced in desire and practice; a sincere and complete contempt for my human SELF, and a loyal determination not to consider or treat it otherwise than as an instrument, a ransom, victim of the twofold charity that makes zeal?

COLLOQUY.—O Jesus, I seem to behold you with a balance in your hands. In one scale you have placed truth, justice, order to reinstall, the rights of God and your own to revindicate throughout the world, souls to save from hell. You have also put your appeal, your example, your Blood, my privileged vocation with my secondary end and the vows that engage me to it. And what shall I put in the opposite scale . . . what? My ease, comfort and well-being; my preferences or fancies, either moral or intellectual; my scientific or literary tastes; my vainglory, desire of praise and sensitiveness—all that makes up the poor SELF of nature; all that your Gospel calls my soul—the soul that must be lost if it is to be saved, and more still, if possible, in order to save others? In short: in one scale love of God and of souls; in the other my narrow and miserable love of SELF. Which of the two has weighed down the balance hitherto? Which is going to do so in future? O Jesus, voluntary and complete victim of zeal, create in me a new heart after the model of your own!

XXI

The Public Life of Our Lord

(2) Jesus Exemplar of Constancy in Zeal

Having meditated upon the zeal of our divine Lord in general, we may now consider it under one aspect in particular, viz., that it was unwearied and never-failing. His life on earth was a continual history of sacrifice and humiliation—all undertaken or sustained for love of God and souls, as well as for the example and instruction of those who should follow Him in the apostolic calling. And yet, in spite of all, He continued as He had begun : unwearied in well-doing, undismayed by humiliation, undeterred by sacrifice.

Preludes as in the previous meditation.

Jesus made an entire sacrifice of His time, comfort and rest. His time—by day and sometimes by night—belonged to any one who might claim it : *Nicodemus . . . came to Jesus by night* (John iii.) ; when it was not devoted to prayer : *He passed the whole night in prayer to God.* (Luke vi. 12.) If He withdrew Himself from the multitude on occasions it was not from ennui or lassitude, but in order to give Himself to prayer or fly an enthusiasm compromising to the supernatural character of His mission, *e.g.*, after the feeding of the five thousand. (John vi. 15.) Apart from that He was all things to all men.

And He, like myself, experienced bodily fatigue : *being wearied with his journey.* (John iv. 6.) He knew hunger, thirst, actual poverty, danger, vicissitude,

dependence. Now He was a guest at the table of the rich—Levi, Simon, Zachæus, Lazarus—anon the disciples were reduced to appeasing their hunger with ears of corn. We are not told that He did the same, but if they were hungry He who shared their lot must have been so too. And I claim an assured, regular and liberal mode of life as a right! No house of His own: *the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* (Matt. viii. 20.) *Judas had the purse* (John xiii. 29), but there was little in it: a miracle was necessary to meet the demands of the tax-collector. (Matt. xvii. 26.) With justice then does He warn us: *Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on.* (Luke xii. 22.)

So then, without complaint or calculation, Jesus spent His life in the service of God and souls. More than that: His life was sometimes in danger. He fled from Herod (Matt. xiv. 13), from the Pharisees. (John xi. 54.) But when *his hour was come* (John xiii. 1) He ascended to Jerusalem and death.

Everywhere and always, the body His Father had *fitted to* Him (Heb. x. 5) was nothing more in His eyes than an instrument—later a victim. His work accomplished, He delivered it up heroically. Is it thus that I consider mine? Sacrifice of comfort and rest, mortification under the guidance of obedience: these are elementary conditions of the apostolic life.

From the very beginning of His apostolic career Jesus made the sacrifice of the consolations of family life. He left home and His holy Mother at about the age of thirty. (Luke iii. 23.) At one time and another Mary sought discreetly to rejoin, or at least meet Him. *Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee. But he answering him that told him, said: Who is my mother and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren.* (Matt. xii. 47-8-9.) He had

taken unto Himself a new family, His disciples, all faithful souls ; and they were all the world for Him, since they *do the will of my Father that is in heaven.* (50.) In the scheme of the apostolic life the ties of flesh and blood have no place. *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me* (Matt. x. 37), said our Lord. Called by Him to His service, I have renounced, not filial or fraternal piety but the consolations of domestic society. And how complete this renunciation should be is shown by the Master's refusal of delay to the unknown who wished to follow Him, either to bid farewell to his friends or assist at the funeral of his father. (Luke ix. 59, 61.) The Master put all this into practice Himself before He urged it upon others. If I would be an apostle I have to do it too.

Our Lord sacrificed all honour, even to the loss of His personal dignity. Humiliations were His daily bread and it seemed as if the whole world were in conspiracy to make certain that He received it :—

First of all His blood-relations : *Neither did his brethren believe in him.* (John vii. 5.) Some went further : *went out to lay hold on him. For they said : He is become mad.* (Mark iii. 21.) On His return to His native village of Nazareth, *they brought him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.* (Luke iv. 29.)

His spiritual relations, His new family : what honour did they evince for such a Master ? They saw everything, they understood nothing : *Are you also yet without understanding ?* (Matt. xv. 16.) Their slowness to believe : *O foolish and slow of heart to believe.* (Luke xxiv. 25.) Their Jewish and carnal prejudices, which caused them—and Peter at their head—to revolt at the idea of suffering (Matt. xvi. 22. Mark ix. 31) which, even on the morning of the Ascension, hid the spiritual nature of His kingdom and His work. (Acts i. 6.) Such were His chosen friends, His novices : can

we think their companionship was naturally agreeable to Him? They had no honour for Him, and only consoled Him when He had no longer need of consolation—when the Holy Spirit came and He was no longer with them.

Our Lord met with opposition from the Jewish nation—people and princes alike. St. John explains in a sentence: *He came unto his own: and his own received him not.* (John i. 11.) They discussed Him: *Some said: he is a good man. And others said: No, but he seduceth the people.* (John vii. 12.) And I? Can I suppose that my abilities, my virtue, my character, will escape criticism? He found positive incredulity in spite of His miracles: *And whereas he had done so many miracles before them, they believed not in him.* (John xii. 37.) They wanted others more to their liking, miracles with great display: *asked him to shew them a sign from heaven.* (Matt. xvi. 1.) Yes, the incarnate Wisdom, Charity become Man, was met with proud and senseless incredulity: and can I flatter myself that I shall overcome all resistance, light or relight faith in those who love *darkness rather than the light* (John iii. 19.)? But He had adherents, enthusiasts even. What became of their enthusiasm in the hour of trial—the Passion? And what was it worth even at the time? *You seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves* (John vi. 26), *i.e.*, for temporal benefits. From His very mission they only hoped for political freedom and national glory.

Such was the success of Jesus with the multitude. Among those of high degree He found worse: hatred. He *went about doing good* (Acts x. 38) and they hated Him for it—hated Him to death. They calumniated Him: He was *a glutton and a wine drinker* (Matt. xi. 19), a blasphemer (xxvi. 65), in league with the powers of darkness: *by the prince of devils he casteth out devils.*

(Mark iii. 22.) They put questions to Him which were nothing but attempts to *ensnare him in his speech.* (Matt. xxii. 15.) And for Him, who was perfectly cognizant of the implacable hatred that all this implied, what anguish! what bitterness! He knew full well that it would only be appeased when they had brought about His death and could do no more. And shall I, His apostle, dare to expect justice, gratitude, sympathy and affection everywhere? May He teach me to be content with the same measure that was meted out to Him, with the same rancour as that with which they repaid His love!

Poignant as was all this incredulity and hatred, there was another and even more heroic sacrifice which Jesus did not spare Himself: the sterility of His apostolate. What had been wanting in Him for success? Eloquence? *Never did man speak like this man,* said those who heard him. (John vii. 46.) Irreproachable life? *Which of you shall convince me of sin?* (John viii. 46); and there was none to answer. Qualities calculated to gain hearts? He was *beautiful above the sons of men.* (Ps. xliv. 3.) And, after three years of zeal and effort, what was the result? Pitiable! We should be very wrong were we to refuse to face this fact of sterility. While it glorifies Him by emphasizing the full heroism of His abnegation and love, it is instructive and consoling for us. Count the apostolic successes of the Master and strike a balance of His work at the moment when it was about to finish—the vigil of that Cross which gave Him what He had been unable to obtain in three years of the most precious of lives: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.* (John xii. 32.) Up to then whom had He drawn? The great and influential? *Hath any one of the rulers believed in him, or of the Pharisees?* (John vii. 48.) Two indeed could be found: one *secretly for fear of the Jews,* the other had *come to Jesus by night.*

(John xix. 38-9.) The multitude? Were one to count real believers one would despair. Among those who cried *Hosanna* on Palm Sunday must there not have been more than one who cried *Crucify him* on Good Friday? At least then there were His chosen disciples: where were they at the critical moment? One had sold Him; their chief had denied Him; the remainder, *all leaving him, fled.* (Matt. xxvi. 56.) What! Had he not been able to make one fanatic ready to die with Him? No: He died alone, as an unmasked impostor, convicted of falsehood—condemned in public opinion as much by the defection of his friends as by the machinations of His enemies. No: His own did not receive Him; Jerusalem disowned Him. Impotence, sterility, failure: that was how three years of marvels were crowned; such the net result of His personal apostolate!

For me, His associate, the continuator of His ministry, there is consolation in this, but—more than all—a lesson: humility, abnegation, self-effacement. Ah! for my part, I want success—prompt, facile, visible. It would gratify me to see my poor efforts crowned at the very outset, to see the harvest springing up under my hand which has sown it. I dream of rapid conquests and brilliant—conquests that shall be manifestly mine, conquests that every one shall attribute to me and my work. I am a greater and better apostle than my Master then? *Neither is the apostle greater than he that sent him.* (John xiii. 16.) For all that—wonderful to say!—it is neither impossible nor improbable that I may succeed better than He did. Did He not predict it Himself? *Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do: and greater than these shall he do.* (John xiv. 12.) It has been so since the foundation of the Church. But in order to teach me to moderate my ambitions—even apostolic; and above all to efface myself gladly before the successes

of others, Jesus, as Man, not only effaced Himself before the Holy Spirit, by disappearing in order to let Him complete the work: *It is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you* (John xvi. 7.); but He effaced Himself before His own disciples by allowing them to do more good and succeed better externally than Himself: *It is one man that soweth, and it is another that reapeth. I have sent you to reap that in which you did not labour. Others have laboured: and you have entered into their labours.* (John iv. 38.) Who were those others? In the immediate significance they were the ancient prophets: but in the higher reality was it not Himself? To them, the Apostles, the joy of the harvest: to Him the ungrateful task of sowing in stony ground strewn with thorns. And here is abnegation in its last and completest form.

The author of the *Imitation* said truly: *Our Lord Jesus Christ was not one hour of his life without suffering. . . . The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom.* (II. xii. 6-7.) He suffered, not merely appeared to suffer. He suffered both in the present and future—from actual ingratitude, future ingratitude, my own. He would not invite us to labours of which He had not Himself felt the burden, nor offer us a chalice of which He had drunk without tasting its bitterness.

And did these humiliations, bitternesses, contradictions, natural repugnances discourage Him or diminish His zeal? Certainly not: they all passed over His soul without overwhelming it. Here is indeed the *workman that needeth not to be ashamed,* for whom St. Paul asks. (2 Tim. ii. 15.) Nor did He finally abandon the ungrateful Jerusalem, as in other circumstances He enjoined His Apostles to do. (Matt. x. 14.) Jesus contended to the last extremity with the obstinacy of His compatriots. He would show me in His own Person that constancy of zeal, that longanimity which

nothing wears down. Nor was He one who should say: All or nothing! A sad maxim this! daughter of pride, for it amounts to: I will succeed at once and completely or I will have no more to do with the matter! Mother of pusillanimity too; for it will speedily beget vexation, discouragement, inertia. Obstacles present themselves, enthusiasm evaporates, effort ceases: It is all of no use! True zeal, the zeal of Jesus Christ, says: I will do all that is possible, or at least the best I can—all that God will give me to accomplish. St. Ignatius parcelled out the world among his handful of men and told them that even to have hindered one sin is a sufficient reward for the cares and labours of a lifetime. Jesus, the Master, has a Heart larger still: He would inflame the entire world: *I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled?* (Luke xii. 49); but nevertheless He spent Himself magnificently that He might haply enkindle some few sparks here and there. That is the measure of true zeal, pure zeal; because it is the measure of generosity, disinterestedness and abnegation: because it is the absolute death of SELF.

How then explain such heroic abnegation? First, by the love He had for His Father and consequently for souls; a love that placed its legitimate honour in never hesitating before an obstacle, never abandoning an enterprise; a love that gloried in contending with ingratitude to the end—to overcome it by force of benefits conferred if possible, but at least not to admit defeat by ceasing to confer them. But that is not the whole explanation: *Christ did not please himself* supplies the rest. (Rom. xv. 3.) Wherefore, as He told His disciples: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* (John iv. 34.) These two then, taken together, alone explain the constancy of a zeal that human ingratitude, incredulity and perversity might well have stifled altogether. And this is for me as for Him, the last

word of the law of zeal: I shall be an apostle in the exact measure in which I forget MYSELF, sacrifice MYSELF, and despise MYSELF in practice; and I shall despise MYSELF in the same measure that I love God.

COLLOQUY.—O divine Apostle: In the exercise of your zeal you have suffered as really, and much more bitterly, than you will ever cause me to suffer. Since you call me to suffering, I await and expect it—it is my right. It is but the law of the ministry to which you have done me the honour of giving me a vocation. I hear you say of St. Paul: *This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name. . . . For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* (Acts ix. 15, 16.) And since *Apostolate* and *Suffering* are mutually convertible terms, I not only accept suffering in my apostolate, but desire it. I shall never suffer so greatly as you did; but may I be content to suffer in the same manner!

XXII

The Public Life of Our Lord

(3) Jesus Christ Sovereign Type of Wisdom in Zeal

Having meditated upon the admirable constancy of the zeal of our divine Lord, we now have to consider the unvarying wisdom with which it was exercised. Not only was it ever under His sovereign control, but He infused into it a practical order, and one which He would have me infuse into my own.

This order was nowhere more apparent than in His ministry to, and solicitude for persons: He reserved both for those to whom His Father had sent Him: *I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.* (Matt. xv. 24.) It was His Apostles that He sent—after the Resurrection—to teach all nations. (Matt. xxviii. 19.) But He Himself did not attempt to serve His Father more or otherwise than His Father wished. And I? Have I not my studies, my class, my official duties, my occupation, laid down for me by obedience? Then I must attend to them before anything else. Am I tempted to neglect my present work in order to day-dream of the foreign missions, or provide in imagination for the needs of the Church Universal; or, worse still, am I among the number of those who are so much occupied in saving souls (!) that they have no time to attend to their official duties? Disorder, false zeal—if indeed it be zeal at all.

Among the Jews, to whom His Father had sent Him, His first preference was for *they also whom thou hast given me*—the Apostles. (John xvii. 24.) Who are

they that have been given *me*? My spiritual family, my community, my colleagues. My first apostolate should be exercised among them. When Jesus lavished Himself upon His Apostles it was not always for their benefit alone, but in view of the souls which the sanctity of those privileged men would one day profit. My religious brethren are, or will be apostles, and by the good I do them I acquire a meritorious part in the good they are doing or will do in the future. Besides: *A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city.* (Prov. xviii. 19.) Then must I show myself sympathetic towards my brother, his work, his joys and his sorrows; refrain from criticism, never "damn with faint praise," and—above all—guard against unworthy jealousy—as when I see him doing work I could not do myself. How much good can I do or leave undone according as I sacrifice or not my unthinking, unconscious egoism, the every-one-for-himself policy to charity!

After His Apostles, the favoured clients of the Master were not those He liked best (Mary, Martha and Lazarus, for example), but those to whom most good could be done—the greatest glory rendered to God.

He went or drew to Himself, children. (Matt. xix. 14.) And shall I think the care of a class, or the routine duties of a college incompatible with my age, my talents, my dignity—I who, if properly appreciated, would be preaching brilliant sermons to fascinated congregations? Whence comes any such right, or even the idea of it: from love of God or love of MYSELF?

Jesus went among the poor, the lowly, the simple and, as even the world admits, Holy Church does the same to-day in the persons of her priests. But there is another poverty besides the material one: poverty spiritual and intellectual. And the unattractive, the indocile, the unintelligent, the ungrateful—all whom I should be naturally inclined to leave alone—are of this kind. Then shall I confine my ministrations to

those cultivated and pious souls in quest of consolation and higher spirituality (!) who will reverence me as an oracle; and refuse to face the perverse, the contemptuous, the ill-mannered perhaps? If so, am I seeking God or seeking MYSELF?

In short: zeal was the great alms that Jesus went about distributing during the three years of His public life. And He distributed it without acceptation of persons, as even His enemies were forced to confess: *Neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of men.* (Matt. xxii. 16.) And that signifies that He did not distribute His benefits according to His natural inclinations, but according to the needs and good will of the recipients and in the interests of the glory of God. And I also who, like St. Peter, have neither silver nor gold (Acts iii. 6), have to make an incessant alms of my zeal. Therefore, here as everywhere, I must forget myself and see nothing but God and souls purely for Him.

Again let me note that Jesus not only distributed with an incomparable wisdom what we may call the quantity of zeal bestowed upon each one, but He also varied its quality. Who but He has been known to condescend so perfectly to the weakness of each, to enter into the thoughts and feelings of every soul, to identify Himself (so to speak) completely with the client of the moment, in order to seize him by whatever afforded a hold? I can only enter thus into another if I have come out of myself, only acquire this beautiful and potent suppleness by breaking in my own individuality. I can only become *all things to all men* and *save all* (1 Cor. ix. 22) by ceasing to think of SELF, ceasing to seek SELF: in fact, by ruling out SELF altogether.

The zeal of the Master, so perfectly exercised as to persons, was not less so either as to its objects or the nature of the services rendered. Man Himself, He loved all men, body and soul; but according to right order:

the body for the sake of the soul. He cured diseases, fed multitudes, *went about doing good.* (Acts x. 38.) But in everything He aimed at the soul. His miracles were at once accorded to an act of faith or love, *e.g., Do you believe that I can do this unto you?* (Matt. ix. 28); *As thou hast believed* (viii. 13); *O woman, great is thy faith.* (xv. 28.) His benefits in the physical order also conveyed a moral lesson—a lesson explained here and there: *Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee.* (John v. 14.) It was always to touch the soul that Jesus interested Himself in the body; He would give the soul itself what was best for it, faith more than all, whence all else will follow. Jesus sought in everything the greater, the greatest glory of God.

And here I find lights for the practical direction of my zeal:—

As a priest, I shall be able to effect—by my influence with others—many works of corporal mercy. But I must never forget that spiritual mercy is my proper work. Permitted by obedience, I may interest myself in social questions; even make a speciality of them and become an authority. But it must ever be according to the spirit of my state—as an apostle, a consulting theologian; not as a political partisan or humanitarian declaimer. More than all must I beware of absorbing myself in such matters to such an extent as to compromise—and this has been known—the taste, and therefore the capacity, for carrying out my true mission: the gaining of souls for Jesus Christ.

In my own official domain I must direct all my efforts to the highest and most supernatural ends. Above all I must inculcate faith—that faith which it is more than ever important to affirm in these times; by instruction rather than discussion, by definite explanation rather than controversy. Next to faith,

piety, which is not engendered spontaneously nor merely an end in itself, but flows from faith and fructifies in virtue. As a preacher : rather than search for new views, or take the great truths of faith for granted and discourse vaguely around them, or inveigh portentously against unbelief in general, I should teach, catechize without relaxation to produce love and practice with full understanding. *Preach the word* (2 Tim. iv. 2)—the true word of God and no other.

As a director, I must do the same in substance : enlighten souls, lead them gently to self-conquest for the love of God, by the logical order of faith, piety and virtue. If I do not preserve and follow this essential order or, without recognizing it perhaps, deviate from it through weakness, complacency or desire of popularity, I am not regarding the end sufficiently purely : the glory of God.

As a master, I must ever bear in mind that I have not only to *teach*, but also to *train*—train up men, *i.e.*, good Catholic men. To act as though my cassock were merely my " academical costume " instead of the livery of Jesus Christ whose servant I am, is worse than misplacing my zeal—it amounts to having none at all, at least for Jesus Christ !

As a student : If God has made me a mathematician, historian, scientist, or what not, may He be blessed for it. But He wishes me to become an apostle more than all. And He would have all these natural gifts co-ordinated, subordinated, sacrificed perhaps, in such measure as obedience may prescribe, in the interests of my future apostolate. May God preserve me from perverting His evident designs in my regard for the sake of my personal predilections, from using my time and strength according to my own good pleasure and not according to His !

We return to our Lord and hear Him solemnly define the three great functions of an apostle. We are at the Last Supper and Jesus renders to His Father a public account of His mandate and bears witness to having accomplished it well. *I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* (John xvii. 4.) What then had He done ? Three things :—

(1) He had spoken : *manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me.* (6.) And what a word that had been ! *never did man speak like this man.* (John vii. 46.) *The words which thou gavest me, I have given to them.* (xvii. 6.) And how ? *As one having power : and not as the scribes and Pharisees.* (Matt. vii. 29.)

So ought I to do. My word is part of my apostolate. It should express my soul completely : *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* (Matt. xii. 34.) My word, written or spoken, public or private, is the weapon of my apostolate ; and this weapon I ought to forge, temper, refine and perfect as though everything depended on its natural value. Anything it lacks through my fault will be so much wanting to the good of souls and the glory of God. Nevertheless, the word—preaching under every form—is only the first of the three apostolic functions—and the least.

(2) Jesus Christ prayed for His Apostles, their successors, for all future believers, for me. If He did not pray for the world as such, that does not imply that He did not pray for worldlings to obtain their conversion. *He hath prayed for the transgressors*, says the Prophet (Isa. liii. 12), and we know He prayed for His executioners. He prayed all His life : for thirty years prayer was His unique apostolate, and during His three years of external work His prayers were more powerful with God than His words with men. It is grace that converts ; and prayer draws down grace.

Here then is a second weapon for my apostolic hands, and one more efficacious than the first. If I am a man of faith and true zeal I shall value it more than all my external activity, devoted and untiring though it be. Let me pray for my pupils, my hearers, my penitents, for those even who shun my confessional and my pulpit. And though obedience should relegate me to obscurity and insignificance, I shall find in prayer scope for my zeal that will embrace the entire universe.

(3) For souls again, Jesus sanctified Himself: *And for them do I sanctify myself.* (John xvii. 19.) Not by becoming holy or even more holy, but by accumulating merits—above all, sacrifices. Whoso sacrifices himself sanctifies himself; and he who would sanctify himself has no other means but sacrifice. Hence the great power of Christ as an Apostle. It is in the nature of things for, if prayer draws down the grace that converts, sacrifice and sanctity give wings to prayer. Besides which, the facts prove it. By what did Jesus triumph? Whence came the end to the sterility of His external ministry? By what did He commence to draw all men to Himself? By His last effort of personal sanctification: His last sacrifice on the Cross.

It will not be otherwise with me. Prayer, sanctification by sacrifice, union with God, solid and perfect virtue will do more for my apostolate than learning or other natural gifts. By them I can extend my zeal to every interest of God, and relieve that *solicitude for all the churches* which so exercised the soul of St. Paul. (2 Cor. xi. 28.) Nor can this weapon ever be wrested from my hands. Though, in spite of my efforts, I remain a mediocrity in talent, knowledge and eloquence; though infirmity confine me to an arm-chair or bed; though the persecutor imprison and deprive me even of my crucifix and breviary: can all or any of them deprive me of the power to pray and suffer? I can always fight the good fight, gain and save souls—the

more so because I shall offer to God on their behalf, the sacrifice most painful to nature : that of my ordinary and professional activity.

And now, Jesus having shown me in practice the perfect order of the exercise of zeal as to persons and things, the employment of the three apostolic powers —in a word, the supremest wisdom ; I ask myself : to what is this incomparable order due ? To the divine infallibility, no doubt. But besides that ? To the absolute purity and simplicity of His intention. No other desire than the glory of His Father and the salvation of souls ; absolute detachment from every other interest : His own pleasure (Rom. xv. 3), His own glory (John viii. 50), His own will (John v. 30) ; entire sacrifice and self-forgetfulness ; no human SELF, but all necessary and legitimate desires of a true man. He was content to suffer, and there we have the complete explanation of His zeal.

Then Jesus is my model, my living law. For me also, no zeal without abnegation. What can impair it ? Only the remnants of my SELF-LOVE ! What can mislead it, render it ill-advised and fitful ? My SELF-LOVE ! If I do not know how to distribute it between persons according to God, it is because I yield to my natural sympathies or antipathies : SELF-LOVE ! If I do not set about the most useful work by the surest means, it is because I follow my natural tastes and caprices : SELF-LOVE ! If I do not know how to adapt myself to souls, make myself all things to all men, it is because I remain preoccupied with and incapable of coming out of myself : SELF-LOVE ! If I neglect to pray and sanctify myself for souls, it is lack of the spirit of faith, but also the allurement of natural activity : SELF-LOVE ! SELF is the enemy of my perfection and my zeal, of my first and second end alike. Perish

then SELF! I must get rid of it, deliver it up for the Gospel, for the salvation of souls, for the glory of God: and may Jesus Christ help me to do my part!

COLLOQUY.—Lord Jesus, shall I sacrifice your interests and the interests of souls to my own ease and comfort, my tastes and caprices, my own glorification, my over-sensitiveness, my mood of the moment? Save me from such cowardly folly, from such shame, from such an evil!

XXIII

The Three Classes of Men

We are now approaching the crucial point of the retreat: the Election. In its strict sense, an Election implies a decision we wish to arrive at concerning our future state of life, *e.g.*, the priesthood, religious life, marriage; or even the advisability or not of some important step we propose to take in our temporal affairs and which may have a far-reaching influence on our future. In its wider sense—our state of life being irrevocably fixed already—it resolves itself into a simple scheme for the Reform of our life. But the principles of one are equally applicable to the other.

Consequently the meditation on the Three Classes of Men is a serious and uncompromising test of the sincerity of our dispositions in regard to the service of God. It is a question of finding out whether we are offering ourselves *entirely* to the work of sanctification and the apostolate; whether we desire to belong to God completely. If so, we shall be prepared to take the means. *Wilt thou be made whole?* asked our Lord of the infirm man at the pond of Probatica. The man had evidently taken what means he could: *whilst I am coming*. (John v. 7.) In like manner I: do I wish to follow Christ? If I do, I shall be ready to deny myself and take up my cross (Matt. xvi. 24), *i.e.*, get rid of my proud and sensual Self. Otherwise my desire of union with Christ is nought but illusion. But still: wishing to follow Him, as I think I do, may I not be the victim of some self-deception? That is precisely what I have

to ascertain ; and St. Ignatius helps me to do so by his parable of the Three Classes of Men.

First Prelude : the parable.—Six men have duly and lawfully acquired a considerable sum of money—ten thousand ducats to wit. No sin in the acquisition either ; but *not purely for the love of God,* as St. Ignatius puts it. They are evidently men of enlightenment, who know the danger of inordinate affections ; they are more or less inclined to free themselves. They realize that this money constitutes a hindrance to their perfect union with God and consequent peace of mind. But do they really desire to attain these last ? If such is their case, they will seek to know, and be prepared to conform to the will of God in respect to the money ; holding themselves in suspense the while, both as to retaining or parting with it. What they actually do will appear presently.

Second Prelude.—I place myself in presence of that *cloud of witnesses over our head* (Heb. xii. 1)—the angels, the saints, God Himself. While I am considering my Election or Reform, they watch me with absorbing interest : I shall have to answer for the decision I arrive at before them all—one day.

Third Prelude.—Powerless myself, I ask the good Master to aid me to see without illusion and will without reserve. May He help me to root out—of my will at least—all inordinate affection and, at this price, find and embrace the divine will, for the good ordering of my life and in the interest of my soul.

I.—Of these six men, the two first ask nothing better than to rid themselves of the excessive affection for the money that troubles their peace of mind, and thus be enabled to serve God without obstacles. Perhaps they

pray for it, just as one prays for a miraculous cure. But do they *will* what they wish? Evidently not, for they do nothing to carry it out. They would like to be free; but liking is not willing.

A contradictory state this! They dream of result without process, end without means: *The sluggard willeth and willeth not.* (Prov. xiii. 4.) State of mental uneasiness too! Mere wishes do not comfort, they afflict: *My thoughts are dissipated, tormenting my heart.* (Job xvii. 11.) They would suffer less did they make a good effort of will; they admit it perhaps, but have a vague fear of doing so. A humiliating condition as well; since the great power of the soul is the will, and that they do not summon to their assistance. In due proportion, they might say, with the Lost: *We have been able to shew no mark of virtue.* (Wisd. v. 13.) And a dangerous position withal: though there be no sin at the moment, it is *present at the door.* (Gen. iv. 7.) It will come for certain, since these men take no precautions against desire—the mother of sin.

Have I any right to despise these men? Am I so sure that I have never belonged to this first class of unfruitful cravings; nay, can it even be that I belong to it now without realizing the fact? Has there never been a more or less prolonged interval in my life when, while feeling a vague, abstract longing to live more exactly in accordance with my state, I did nothing, or practically nothing to escape from dissipation of mind; from routine, *i.e.*, the mere "putting in" of my spiritual duties; from the seductions of simple natural activity; from practical forgetfulness of my first and greatest object in life—the salvation of my soul? Or, have I never devoted my time and energy to the souls of others, neglecting my own the while—preached to them and risked becoming a castaway myself (1 Cor. ix. 27)? Thus far, negatively. Positively, is it impossible for a religious to descend to the level of the first class and live

there in a fool's paradise: cherish an inordinate affection of any kind, of which the satisfaction is felt but not the weight; thus making for himself a false peace and hardly dreaming of seeking true peace in a real union with God? In an exercise in which it is precisely a question of testing and strengthening the will, surely the first thing to be sought is a full knowledge of myself! *Lord, that I may see* (Luke xviii. 41)—see myself as I really am!

II.—After the inert, and consequently sterile will, St. Ignatius offers for our consideration good will which is partial and therefore illusory. The men of the first class do not offer themselves to effort or labour; now we have two who do offer themselves but not entirely. Some good will to conquer the inordinate affection indeed they have, but they make reservations. And all experience goes to show that the object of the reservation is always the indispensable one—the one God wants. In the present instance, they want to shake off the inordinate affection while retaining the object of it; they pretend to detach their heart from the money, but only on condition that it remains theirs.

This disposition is perhaps more contradictory than the other. In that, there was an opposition between the conscience that saw and the will that rejected the means. In this, the will is divided against itself—the sluggard, again! How unite the supernatural joys of detachment to the natural gratification of satisfied attachment—*serve God and mammon* in fact? (Matt. vi. 24.) Illusion! These men aspire to become poor in imagination but remain rich in reality, detach themselves in theory while depriving themselves of nothing in practice—in effect, not detach themselves at all. Those of the first class were at least honest in their feebleness, they avowed it; these endeavour to hide it.

Though this disposition be not conscious and wilful, it is at least displeasing to God. And, in a question between God and the soul, is a man not bound to consider the full import of his actions? In the case before us, these men are presuming to deal with Him on equal terms, as with one upon whom they can impose conditions. Worse still: they are not prepared to conform themselves to His will, but asking Him to conform to theirs. Moreover, there is fraud even in such bargain as they are willing to make: God is to leave them their money, and they are to pay Him the homage of an imaginary detachment. True, He may treat them indulgently, as one who should say: "If you are really detached from your ducats, why all this fear lest I should take them away?" But He has the right to be more severe, and say: *Be not deceived: God is not mocked.* (Gal. vi. 7.) In short, these men would make an illusory concession and claim God as their accomplice in making it! Pilate was of this second class of men, one who "let *I dare not* wait upon *I would*;" and our Lord would have suffered less had he belonged to the first class and taken no pains at all to save Him.

I am as justly indignant with Pilate as I am with all who make reservations or scheme—but let me look at home! And I may remind myself that it is not a question of accidental failures, or of the contradictions of a mind sincere in the main but overcome by surprise and weakness, but one of reservations and habitual restrictions that lessen and mislead even the will to do good. For example: I will be a good priest or religious —*but* with moderation; every one cannot aspire to high sanctity. Edifying too—*but* not with "novice edification," I have got beyond that. Obedient! Of course I will be obedient—*but* with a reasonable obedience; besides which, I should be a nuisance to superiors were I to press the ideal too far. Charitable! Why certainly

—*but* charity is impossible with persons of a certain temperament ; in addition to which I have a certain dignity to maintain, and is it not good for my neighbour himself to feel sometimes that there is a limit he cannot pass ?

And there are many other *buts*—exceptions and attenuations that naïvely reveal the spirit of the second class. And at the bottom of them all lies the illusion or weakness of will that shrinks from laying *the axe to the root of the tree.* (Matt. iii. 10.)

III.—After the undecided and chimerical come the resolute : the two men in the third class. For them there is only one fixed idea, one single interest : that of God and their own salvation. Consequently the ducats are already given up in their hearts ; and they only await the divine directions as to their actual disposal.

Do these men really *will* ? Yes, since they will without reserve. Do they really will *the end* ? Yes, since they will the means of attaining it. Do they really wish to free themselves from the natural affection they now feel ? Yes, since they are resolved to face deprivation, perhaps indigence, if God require it. These are really men of sound judgment and good will who—had they only made the meditation on the *Kingdom of Christ*—would have been among those who offer themselves entirely to labour : to every labour, whether necessary or simply useful. Their Election will be sincere and we may surmise that, should God leave them their money, they will *buy as though they possessed not.* (1 Cor. vii. 30.)

But supposing they lose their money, what do they gain ? Several things :—

1. Complete domination of their inordinate affections : *The lust (of sin) shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it.* (Gen. iv. 7.)

2. Moral assurance of salvation ; for these are they who would lose a limb if it became a cause of scandal to them. (Matt. xviii.)
3. Release from every burden that weighs them down or allures them to sin : *laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us.* (Heb. xii. 1.)
4. Liberty of spirit : *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest ?* (Ps. liv. 7.)
5. No obstacle to their union with God : *My soul hath stuck close to thee.* (Ps. lxii. 9.) And
6. *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding.* (Phil. iv. 7.) Was not St. Ignatius right when he said that the third class was the best ?

Has this state always been my own with regard to my perfection and all the means it supposes ? Is it mine now ? If not, it must become so ; at this moment, more than ever, it ought to be so. If it does not, either I shall not dare to outline a plan of reform at all ; or the plan I do outline will be nothing but illusion, insincerity, impotence. Examine ; judge unsparingly and *let no man deceive himself.* (1 Cor. iii. 18.)

Colloquy.—If I aspire to perfection, a clear knowledge of myself is not sufficient. I must pray for strength of will ; and meanwhile commence to act as though I had it : *For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish.* (Phil. ii. 13.)

At the moment of arranging my scheme for a more perfect life anew, it may be that I shrink from some particular sacrifice which, in due degree, would be for me what the chalice of His Passion was to our Lord. Well then, let me not only accept this painful eventuality but have the courage to go out to meet it. Not only say : *If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt* (Matt. xxvi. 39) ; but : " May this chalice that I fear actually come ! " But supposing God were to grant my petition ? Well,

have I not asked for it ? Am I going to fall back to the level of the second class ? And if He should grant it, will it not be a sensible pledge of His providence, of His predilection for me ? But I have a horror of it ! No doubt, according to the natural man ; but that is all the more reason for asking for it, for, is it not this natural man that I have to conquer ? But to pray thus : is it not to lie to myself, almost to God ? No, it is to oppose the aspirations of free-will to the outcries of nature. But will not resignation suffice ? No, not always—and that from the standpoint of simple wisdom and supernatural prudence. When a tree leans to one side, it is not enough to replace it in the vertical for it will not stay there. What it requires is a vigorous push to the farther side ; and then only will it return to the desired position and remain upright. Am I to have the presumption to pray otherwise and better than our Lord Himself—He, that the chalice might pass from Him ; I, that it may be presented to me ? Be it so in appearance just at the moment : regard the material object of the prayer alone, and have no scruple about surpassing Him. I have to bear in mind that He had not my needs—no concupiscence to overcome, no inordinate affections to root out. For my own part, let me not discuss, bargain or evade ; act without violence, bitterness or sadness, but with simple determination, confidence and supernatural joy : *for God loveth a cheerful giver.* (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

So I will conclude by once more making the colloquy of the *Two Standards*, viz., that, through the intercession of Mary and by the merits of Jesus Christ, I may be vested in, and wear interiorly the robe with which my Master was clothed for me : that I may have courage to act spontaneously against my sensuality, my carnal and worldly love ; and more especially that God will deign to help me against that greatest of all the enemies of His glory and my own salvation :

MYSELF. And as it is but little to resign myself to the trifling, inevitable humiliations of my daily life; I will ask that humiliations may be sent to me; that my self-love may be wounded, thwarted, kept in check by opposition and even failure—provided only that the glory of God be in no way compromised thereby.

XXIV

The Three Degrees of Humility

The meditation on the *Two Standards* is designed to warn us against the deceits of the devil; that on the *Three Classes of Men* is a test of our sincerity in any resolution we may have formed. The object of the present one is to obtain the proper disposition or desire to carry out our resolution. This meditation is the last word preparatory to the Election or scheme for the Reform of our life: it is, moreover, our ultimatum to the proud and sensual Self.

First Prelude.—The hill of Calvary intersected horizontally by three platforms or level spaces. At the summit, our Lord, standing and glorious, bearing His Cross like a triumphal standard, and saying: *If thou wilt be perfect . . . come.* (Matt. xix. 21.) Near Him but a little lower, His holy Mother. Above, heaven open: God the Father regarding His Son with infinite complacency and myself with indulgent kindness and an evident intention to place me with His Son.

Second Prelude.—Then I will ask that I may be so devoted to my Master as to be content to be as He was (Matt. x. 25); and that my love for Him may induce me to deny myself and take up my cross daily (Luke ix. 23); to the end that, suffering with Him I may also reign with Him. (2 Tim. ii. 12.)

I.—The First Degree of Humility consists in the

habitual disposition to obey the law of God in all things; in such wise that I would not deliberate—whatever might be offered or threatened—about breaking a commandment, either human or divine, which bound me under pain of mortal sin. And, if I am to save my soul at all, this First Degree of Humility must be mine.

Thus then is the choice offered me: God's will or my own here; heaven or hell hereafter: *Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death.* (Jer. xxi. 8.) A right choice involves the suppression of the independent SELF—the last form of the proud SELF. It also necessitates rigorous control of the sensual SELF—the SELF that is attached to material things and things of sense. The tempter is not likely to offer me *all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them*, as he presumed to offer our Lord (Matt. iv. 8)—what need, when so much less will serve his purpose? He offers me the gratification of my inordinate affections—the kingdoms of my little world. I consider: what are they? and how do I meet them? If I have the habitual disposition to resist them, I can still err and fail; but if I have not, what peril to my soul!

It is quite true that an act of this First Degree can be produced without the habitual disposition, *e.g.*, a man, who has by no means lived in it, being suddenly called upon to deny his faith under pain of death and refusing to do so. But this is a wholly exceptional case and an extraordinary grace of God. Normally, the decisive act is not produced without the habitual disposition. On the other hand, such is human frailty that existing habit is no guarantee of the act. That is why it is necessary to work out our salvation *with fear and trembling*. (Phil. ii. 12.) But, as a general rule, habit will always be the best guarantee of acts. And my best security for faithfully responding to some call to heroic virtue in the future will be my faithful

response to the lesser ones now. *Wherefore be you also ready.* (Matt. xxiv. 44.) Am I ready ?

II.—The Second Degree of Humility is more perfect and consists in two things : (*a*) Habitual indifference of will, as already explained and (*b*) the habitual disposition to avoid deliberate venial sin, were it necessary to sacrifice a fortune, the entire creation, life itself, to that end.

These two things are connected. Why do I commit venial sin ? Because I am not indifferent. For example : I am proud or vain. But if I did not care what people think of me there would be no temptation to excuse myself or lie. The saints knew God and therefore did not care for creatures ; consequently they were untroubled by what troubles us. Whence comes inordinate affection for creatures—persons, places, things, occupations ? From inordinate affection for ourselves ; we are not indifferent ; we seek our own satisfaction or glorification rather than the interests and glory of God. He who is indifferent is humble ; and we cannot be humble without being indifferent.

This Second Degree of Humility is more noble than the First ; not only by complete independence of natural affections and more severe delicacy of conscience, but by superiority of motive. The First Degree is rather dictated by self-interest : we fear hell or we regard God as a good that is not to be lost. In this Second Degree there is still the element of fear ; but it is filial rather than servile. For, in practice, desire to avoid purgatory, fear of mortal sin into which habitual venial sin may gradually lead us, will not be sufficient to induce us to prefer all sacrifices and even death rather than consent to a venial sin. There must be a high conception of the divine sanctity, a profound reverence for the divine good pleasure, an affectionate dread of displeasing the divine Majesty superior to

personal apprehension of chastisement or suffering. In other words : being a more perfect degree of humility it requires a less imperfect charity than the first : we do not regard God as a good we fear to lose, but as a Father whom we would not offend on any account.

III.—We now ascend to a higher plane. We suppose the First and Second Degrees already acquired : sin no longer in question, inordinate affection conquered, no supernatural interest to be gained, the divine good pleasure not even manifested—we have done *all those things that are commanded.* And yet we are, comparatively speaking, *unprofitable servants.* (Luke xvii. 10.) Why ? Because there is a Third Degree of Humility, viz., that, supposing equal praise and glory to the divine Majesty, I desire—in order the better to imitate Christ our Lord, and become more like unto Him—poverty with Christ poor than riches ; contempt with Christ contemned than honour ; and to be esteemed useless and foolish for the sake of Him who was so esteemed, rather than be accounted wise and prudent in this world. This degree is more perfect than the other two ; not only on account of its greater cost, but also from its higher motive. That of the First was enlightened self-interest : *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* (Ps. cx. 10.) In the Second, charity appeared : *this is charity : that we walk according to his commandments.* (2 John 6.) But in the Third we are moved by that *perfect charity that casteth out fear* (1 John iv. 18) to *deny* ourselves and *take up our cross daily* and follow Christ. (Luke ix. 23.) And if God has not imposed it as of precept upon the whole world, it is only from condescension to human weakness and in order not to press the natural exigencies of Man's essential relations with Him to their logical conclusion.

In the eyes of the world this Third Degree of Humility is quixotic folly. So it is—if it was folly in Jesus Christ to

exceed the absolute necessities of the Redemption when He could have saved the world at less cost: *Who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.* (Heb. xii. 2.) *But the foolishness of God is wiser than men.* (1 Cor. i. 25.) And for God the Father it has been to have *so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son* (John iii. 16); while for God the Son it was to *love me and deliver himself for me.* (Gal. ii. 20.) And for me this folly must be the endeavour to attain the Third Degree of Humility.

And I ought to set about it at once. It is nothing to the purpose that I am not yet perfect in the Second Degree. Doubtless the three degrees are a moral gradation, but they should not be a successive one. For him that aspires to perfection, the guiding principle should be love of our divine Lord, not only in regard to the Third Degree, but also in regard to the First and Second. And if this be my motive, while inspiring me with a horror of mortal and even of venial sin, it will also impel me to follow Christ closer still.

Further: I have to remember that this Third Degree of Humility is not merely a pious aspiration suitable for times of retreat, but a practical truth to be carried out afterwards in my daily life. When no danger threatened, the disciples professed themselves ready to follow their Master to prison and to death; but when the danger actually appeared they all forsook Him and fled. And it may be the same with me. Just now I am penetrated with the idea that, if I am to follow Christ in glory hereafter I must follow Him in suffering here, *i.e.*, arrive at the goal of perfect humility by the way of privation and humiliation. And in all good faith, despite my natural repugnance, I have resolved to do so.

But to-morrow, after the retreat, when I return to my ordinary duties? What will happen then unless I watch myself very closely? One of two things: either my good resolutions will gradually fade away, or I shall sit down to wait opportunities for putting them into

practice. Perhaps I shall dream of a recrudescence of the religious persecutions of former times—my house besieged by an infuriated crowd, missiles flying through the air, insults and perhaps violence offered me if I venture out of doors; I even picture myself being dragged forth for summary execution. And with what patience and fortitude do I conduct myself! How I glory in the fact that the Third Degree of Humility has come home to me at last! I can almost hear my fervent prayers for my executioners. Well, such times have been in this land, and, despite probabilities, might again be. But, in dreaming of heroic possibilities in the future, I may be overlooking the prosaic actualities of the present. Besides which, even if those possibilities do become realities for me, I shall—in default of an exceptional grace, which I have no right to expect—assuredly fail *then*, if I have neglected to prepare myself for them by making use of the ordinary opportunities that my daily life affords *now: he that is unjust in that which is little is unjust also in that which is greater*. (Luke xvi. 10.) And opportunities abound. My pupils are idle, perhaps unruly: I must retain my composure—inwardly if possible, outwardly at all costs. My projects are opposed, may be ridiculed: I must neither allow myself to be overcome by my natural resentment nor abandon them in disgust; but accepting the situation do the best I can here and now. My sermons and writings, so carefully prepared, are severely criticized; though the matter be irreproachable the manner may be open to question—there is always some loophole for the critic: I have to guard myself against either irritation or discouragement. My administration is at fault—every one always knows more about the work than the man who has to do it: I must still show myself gentle and approachable. I am treated as of little account in my house or community; and routine work that "any one can do" is assigned to

me because " he can do that at any rate " : well, Jesus Christ swept up the shavings in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth—if He, why not I ? My superior makes me feel my dependence acutely and finds all manner of fault with me : I ought, in spite of myself, to find it good that it should be so. When these things, or any like them, happen, then is the time to recall the resolutions of my retreat and the colloquies I made, asking God to send me humiliations and mortifications. My prayers have been answered—not perhaps in the manner I anticipated and prepared for, but in the manner that touches the weak point in my character, the one on which I am more especially sensitive.

So far so good. By constant effort and with many failures I succeed in conducting myself as a religious should when confronted with the trials of my daily life. But I have not arrived at the Third Degree of Humility in default of two things : habit and motive.

Habit, in this as in everything else, comes by constant repetition of the same act. Until humility has become a fixed habit of mind with me, *i.e.*, that I do really believe myself, not only an entirely unprofitable servant before God but the last and least among the brethren, SELF will always clamour for consideration ; I shall always be liable to be taken off my guard, to lose patience and say that the limit has been reached. Nor will any miracle be worked on my behalf. The grace of God will always be given me ; but I must co-operate with it, *i.e.*, do my part by paying the price. And the price of humility is humiliation even unto seventy times seven and perhaps one more. And only by force of thus acting as though I had it will the habitual disposition take root and gradually establish itself.

And the motive ? Love of Jesus Christ suffering and desire to be like Him : *the charity of Christ presseth us.* (2 Cor. v. 14.) St. Paul assures us that though we do all manner of good works and even suffer martyrdom

—and what more could man do, materially speaking ?—and have not charity the while, it is all to no purpose. (1 Cor. xiii.) In like manner I : though I submit to every sort of humiliation from professional necessity, for the sake of example, or from any other motive than love of Jesus Christ, the Third Degree of Humility is not mine. It is only love of Jesus Christ suffering that will render privation and humiliation even supportable at first. But, insensibly and by degrees, this same love will cause them to appear desirable, if not agreeable, which is no part of the question. Then, not content to accept them without murmuring, we incline to anticipate and even seek them : because to elect for them is to elect for Jesus Christ. Arrived at that point, we are at the Third Degree of Humility in which every virtue is possible, and as ready as man can be for any great trials or sufferings that God may deign to send us.

Colloquy.—O Jesus, I ask you for such privations and humiliations as you may be pleased to send me. Perhaps I even ask for such or such a trial in particular —not out of the depths of my imagination or invented expressly for the occasion, but reasonably foreseen according to my actual circumstances. This I ask, not as a remedy or even a necessary antidote, but because it is the chalice of which you first drank for love of me. You yourself said at the Last Supper : *Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me.* (John xvii. 24.) You asked that your own might be with you in heaven. For the moment I pass by the thought of heaven and, since our common Father has given me to you, I wish nothing better here on earth than to be as you were. And though I ask this in all sincerity, yet am I conscious of not desiring it as I should wish to desire it. Impose it on me then ; draw me to your service as by force : *Draw me : we will run after thee.* (Cant. i. 3.)

XXV

Reform of our Life

A RETREAT is concerned with the future as well as the past. It not only marks the halting-place of a blameworthy or too imperfect life, but also the point of departure for a better one. Hence we should derive from the Exercises, not a vague, general desire for improvement but a definite scheme of reform, morally universal and ratified by a firm resolution.

In the case of the annual retreat of a religious, whose state of life is already fixed, there seems no necessity for an Election in the strict sense—except perhaps in the accidental case of an important decision to be arrived at, *e.g.*, the undertaking or not of some special work to which one feels called. Apart from such an exceptional case the practical outcome of the Exercises is a simple Reform of Life, to which the methods of an Election can be applied.

St. Ignatius has outlined a general programme for this Reform, in such sort as to be applicable to any one, clerical or lay. In this there are three salient points :—

1. The foundation of a well-regulated life is the right appreciation of our condition. We are creatures, whose sole reason for existence is the glory of God and our own salvation. More especially in my capacity of priest or religious ought I to have nothing but that in view, and to that everything else must be subordinated. Consequently, any affection, not merely opposed but

alien to that and therefore inordinate, must have no place in my projects for the future.

2. Wherefore I must convince myself that the more completely I *deny myself, i.e.*, divest myself of self-love, human interests and natural preferences—all that SELF stands for in fact—the more I shall advance in God's service. So the first and last word of all reform is God : to do the utmost possible to serve and glorify Him, and see nothing but Him in all I do.

3. Between the two comes a consideration of the duties of my state. St. Ignatius supposes the case of a man of the world in good circumstances and urges him to reflect on the duties of his position, the government of his household and the employment of his means. In my own case, nothing is easier than to apply a like consideration to my own affairs : my spiritual life, obedience, zeal, regularity, work and so on—all heretofore considered at length. And the outcome of this review of my spiritual condition should be, not merely a more exact knowledge of myself and a renovation of the firm purpose of amendment I made in my confession, but the directive lines on which my future life is to be conducted—matter for resolutions in fact.

It is evident that I ought to conclude my retreat thoroughly resolved to conquer my failings and practise the virtues of my state. But if I am to do this I must be definite. It will be well therefore to concentrate attention on two things : a disposition to be acquired, and one single resolution bearing upon it.

By " disposition " is implied a general design, under the influence of which my life is to be guided in future. I may take a virtue I most prize, or, on the contrary, of which I feel my special need. If I have already formed such a design, let me thank God and persevere in it. If not, I must seek and ask for it. Otherwise I

shall be merely lopping off branches when I ought to be laying the axe to the root of the tree.

This is necessary because every one has some weak point in his character, from which—unconsciously perhaps—all his faults and failings flow : some development of SELF. For example, let us suppose SELF to be an active-minded, energetic individual. His motto is work—strenuous, unremitting work. And he does work—for others—yet his work is very often unfruitful. Why ? Because he has lost sight of the fact that *neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth : but God that giveth the increase.* (1 Cor. iii. 7.) He is in the valley and fighting, when he should be at the top of the hill, lifting up his hands. (Exod. xvii. 11.) More than this : is he working for himself the while, or is he one of those who preach to others and risk being castaway themselves ? (1 Cor. ix. 27.) Both are developments of the same failing : over-reliance on mere natural activity. And the necessary disposition would seem to be a more vivid realization of the supernatural, and consequently greater union with God.

The general disposition being thus established, the particular resolution should attack my failures in the past at their source. To follow out the previous example : I have been too little united with God in the past ; why ? Because I have not lived as in His presence, my work of the moment has absorbed me entirely, my direct spiritual duties have been delayed or omitted to suit my inclination, at best only " put in." Why ? Because I did not begin the day well—my Mass was not said or heard with devotion. Why ? Because my meditation was only perfunctory, not real. Why ? Because, since my preparation last night, my mind was engrossed with other matters. Why ? Because the preparation itself was carelessly made and with no real interest. Hence the best resolution to make will

perhaps be to be less dissipated in mind, less intent upon *telling or hearing some new thing* (Acts xvii. 21) on the one hand ; or more careful to do the right thing at the right time only on the other—in any case, to regard the preparation of my meditation as a serious duty.

And so of other matters.

Then it will be well to add another resolution to this one, viz., to remake it after each acknowledged failure. Knot the thread that has been broken : give God this mark of humility and also of faithful good will—is not the natural tendency of self-love to abandon all in disgust after several ineffectual attempts ? There are two kinds of perseverance : that of the perfect who never or hardly ever fall ; and that of ordinary, but nevertheless good, souls who always recover themselves. This last perseverance at least should be my own. It supposes humility, it maintains it, and is therefore a good means to the glorious constancy of the perfect.

XXVI

THIRD WEEK

The Last Supper

Since the Holy Eucharist is so very closely connected with the Passion—foreshadowing and commencing it at the Cenacle, just as it will recall and continue it to the end of time—we will pass over the other incidents of the Last Supper and concentrate our attention on its Institution alone—insisting that it was, in very truth, a sorrowful mystery.

First Prelude.—We recall the facts of history and faith, single and threefold: the first Eucharistic Transubstantiation, the first Mass, the first Communion the world saw—Jesus giving Himself to us for a perpetual victim, perpetual companion, perpetual spiritual nourishment.

Second Prelude.—We draw a mental picture of the scene in the Cenacle after the paschal supper and the washing of the feet. Jesus, more gentle, grave and impressive than ever, takes bread in His holy and venerable hands and raises His eyes to heaven. The eleven Apostles—for Judas is no longer there—rivet their gaze on the Master and remain silent and motionless; for they infer from His attitude that something wonderful is about to take place.

Third Prelude.—I will ask that I, who know what was accomplished the moment after, may have a more

intense realization of what Jesus did in instituting the Holy Eucharist; what He suffered in doing it; and what I ought to do in return for so much love.

I.—Our divine Lord, *having loved his own who were in the world, loved them unto the end.* (John xiii. 1.) Furthermore: His *delights were to be with the children of men.* (Prov. viii. 31.) Nevertheless: not only was it expedient for them, but the will of the eternal Father that the Son of man should go *according to that which is determined.* (Luke xxii. 22.) Behold our Lord, like St. Paul, straitened between two conflicting desires. (Phil. i. 23.) Which is to yield? The paternal will? Impossible! *for I do always the things that please him.* (John viii. 29.) Then it must be His love for men? No, nor that either! For He has at command a power to which everything must yield: *the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* (Phil. iii. 21.) Jesus will depart without departing, remain without remaining. Since His Father wills it, He will deprive men of the sensible charm, while leaving them the reality of His adorable presence.

This is My Body, says the All-Powerful: not in the figurative sense assumed by Protestants, but a real, permanent presence, remaining as long as this seeming bread shall remain bread. Further: this seeming bread, which is my Body, Myself, I will render renewable as long as my Church shall endure. I shall ever have tabernacles even though they be hidden, and priests even though they be proscribed. So shall I be able to say: *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

Thus did our Lord realize and disclose a first marvel: the real and permanent Presence. But, in doing so, He conceived and accomplished another: the perpetual Sacrifice. He had told His disciples: *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his*

friends (John xv. 13); and this counsel of perfection He was shortly to put in practice in His own divine Person. But the love, the triumph of which is death, exhausts itself by its very triumph. Miracles apart, man dies but once; nor would Christ Himself be an exception to the rule: *Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more.* (Rom. vi. 9.) And because He loved man *with an everlasting love* (Jer. xxxi. 3), He would say in reality what St. Paul only said in metaphor: *I die daily.* (1 Cor. xv. 31.) How?

Having said: *This is my body which is given for you* (Luke xxii. 19), Jesus presently adds: *This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you.* (20.) Behold them separated: not as they will commence to be by the sweat of blood in the Garden, nor as they will finally be by the soldier's lance on Calvary: but separated now—separated by a mysterious separation which is in no wise a figure of speech. Thus does Jesus place Himself in advance in a state of sacrifice—a passive, dependent victim; in a state of death without being dead, which theology cannot explain with certainty, but which faith believes and confesses. Thus does Jesus anticipate Calvary; and thus will Calvary itself be renewed continually until the end of time. For He enjoins the Apostles, not merely to "remember me when you do this," but: *Do this for a commemoration of me.* (Luke xxii. 19.) He will only die physically and painfully once, but He will die mystically as long as the world endures and there are priests therein: *in every place there is sacrifice* (Mal. i. 11); and *as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until he come.* (1 Cor. xi. 26.)

Here then is a second marvel: the Mass which I say or hear every day—the second benefit of the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

From its very nature, love desires to give itself, to unite itself in the most complete manner with its object.

Such was, without doubt, the desire of Jesus at the Last Supper. But, did He bestow Himself entirely as He is, this would mean the gift of perfect and sensible union, the vision of the divine Essence—delights reserved for heaven; and divine Providence does not permit that Jesus shall thus establish a heaven upon this earth. How then can love follow its bent without contravention of the law?

Take ye and eat. This is my body . . . Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood, says the Lord. (Matt. xxvi. 26-28.) To the eternal amazement of the angels and the eternal scandal of unbelievers present and future, Jesus conceives and carries out the marvellous design of making Himself food and drink for the faithful to the end of time. Had He not previously declared that: *My flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed . . . He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.* (John vi. 56-59)? Once again then is the obstacle removed, divine Providence obeyed, and His own love satisfied. Jesus gives Himself entire but under a veil; He unites Himself to us without causing His presence to be sensibly perceived. The gift and union are transitory, but they are real and perfect in substance; they are effected every day if we will have it so.

And that is what Jesus bestows at the Cenacle: Real and permanent Presence, never-ending Sacrifice; absolute gift of Himself. Triple victory of His love for man—for me!

II.—But this victory is not achieved without pain; this love not satisfied without very evident self-abnegation, which affords both its proof and its measure. For some few hours to come Jesus will still be capable of suffering in heart and body, and He foresees that the Holy Eucharist must be an occasion of suffering and opprobrium for Himself. We may consider this in detail:—

(*a*) The abdication of His visible dignity. In the crib we recognized Him as a child; on the Cross we shall behold a man, albeit in the throes of death; in the sepulchre a pale, rigid corpse, but still a human form. But in the fragile Host that rests inert within the tabernacle, what remains of man there? Still more, what remains of God? What complete dependence on every human will, on every sacrilegious caprice! He has *emptied himself* indeed. (Phil. ii. 7.) It may be that this voluntary abasement and annihilation were not painful in themselves. But the consequences: the pretexts He was conscious of affording for unbelief, raillery and blasphemy!

(*b*) Humiliations in the moral order: outrages formal and satanic; the Blessed Sacrament insulted, stolen, trampled under foot, unworthy Communions. And others, less atrocious but no less poignant:—

Incredulity. In the synagogue at Capharnaum the Jews revolted at the announcement of the Holy Eucharist. They said: *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* And *many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.* (John vi. 53, 67.) To-morrow and ever after there will be those who deny it. They will refuse to credit Him with a love capable of willing it: *This saying is hard; and who can hear it?* (61.) But *we have known and have believed the charity which God hath to us.* (1 John iv. 16.) *I do believe, Lord. Help my unbelief.* (Mark ix. 23.)

Indifference. Among those who will not formally refuse belief in this Mystery, how many will show themselves indifferent to it! They will understand that it is Mass and Communion, they will profess to believe it; but the Church will be driven to *compel them to come in* (Luke xiv. 23), by making Mass of obligation once a week and Communion once a year.

And the Real Presence—that inestimable gift that ought to ravish them? Jesus will have to wait day

and night in His empty churches—wait for the coming of the faithful who seem to have business to transact with every one else but Him, and to find pleasure in every society save His. At the moment of imprisoning Himself in the tabernacle, Jesus foresees that He will often have occasion to say : *I was in prison and you did not visit me.* (Matt. xxv. 43.)

Yet, foreseeing all this and much more, Jesus still persists in offering to the human race a gift which, in part, will not be acknowledged for what it is and, in part, will not be appreciated as such. And why ? Because, in knowing human nature, He also knows its three prevailing weaknesses :—

We are only too apt to value things according to their external splendour. We assist at a High Mass with imposing accessories and are impelled to say : This is Mass indeed ! We do the same in a village church or in a room hired for the purpose and are in no wise moved : Only a Low Mass ! we say. Yet both are the same ; the difference is the difference we make ourselves. When Jesus reduced the essential conditions of the Sacrifice to the minimum, He saw the danger He was incurring of lowering His own prestige, and ignored it. But He could not have done so without suffering on account of the weakness of poor souls, accustomed to judge only by their senses.

Very human it is, too, to value what is difficult or forbidden and lightly esteem what can be had for the asking. Were Communion restricted to once a year, many who now refrain would probably be attracted by that very restriction !

And lastly, human nature values what is rare. The Jews had only one Temple : what if Christians were in like position—Easter kept only in Rome, the Holy Father alone having the right to celebrate ? Suppose the Real Presence were there and nowhere else ? Who would not wish to go ! What pilgrimages there would

be! In the vast majority of cases, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament would be the event of a lifetime.

But no: Jesus has not conceived things so. Catholic churches abound already and others are rising day by day—thus multiplying His Presence and His Sacrifice. Religious, I have my domestic chapel; priest, I may have my private oratory. And so the very profusion of His gift may become the cause of a lack of due appreciation on my part: the Real Presence is a matter of course and I may come to accept it in that way.

Nor are these mere suppositions. We have seen them around us at one time and another—may be we recall them when we reflect upon ourselves. And all the consequences of His Institution of the Holy Eucharist —how by giving Himself with such royal munificence He was delivering Himself to the point of becoming belittled and undervalued—were present to Jesus in the Cenacle. Who shall say what they cost the Sacred Heart at the moment when It was still capable of suffering? And with what truth could He not have said: I should be more valued did I lavish myself less; men would be less sparing towards me were I more careful of myself; I should be better loved by men had I not loved them quite so much.

COLLOQUY.—Confessing that the Institution of the Holy Eucharist is in very truth a sorrowful Mystery, I reflect on myself. Am I among those who console or afflict the Sacred Heart? I regard Jesus, no longer in the Cenacle, nor even on the Cross, but in the Blessed Sacrament, where He has reduced Himself to the verge of nothingness. Why? *The Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself for me.* (Gal. ii. 20.) What have I done, what am I doing to deserve it? Let me enter into myself:—

Religious, I have the Blessed Sacrament under the same roof. Priest, I work with it as the companion of

my labours, by it as the means of accomplishing all I do, I am assumed to be working for it. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is not so much the honoured Guest as the Master of the house—in whose name all should be done, without whose counsel nothing should be undertaken, to whose Heart all should be confided, whose encouragement and consolation should be sought in every trial and difficulty, and *in the place where thy glory dwelleth.* (Ps. xxv. 8.)

Every day I either say Mass or hear it. If I cannot have the sensible devotion I should wish, I am at least master of my external actions. Mass well said or devoutly heard is an act of faith ; Mass well said is a sermon on faith. Does my Mass breathe faith ? diffuse it on those present ? augment it in myself ?—for all experience shows that faith increases with the efforts made to express it.

Internally. In my heart of hearts is Mass the culminating point of my day's work—the supreme pleasure that desire anticipates and remembrance prolongs ? What disposition do I take with me to the altar ? What conformity to the spirit of Jesus Christ, my victim actual and present ? Is it always the spirit of reciprocal love and immolation, of which the day now beginning will afford me opportunities for practice ? Can I refuse to accept them, in the presence of Jesus Christ who dies anew for me, in my hands, by my hands ? Then let me foresee them, at least in general, embrace them for His sake, unite my sufferings to His and draw fresh courage from them.

Priest or not, do I feel the desire for the bread of angels that man eats (Ps. lxxvii. 25) increase or languish in myself ? Is my daily Communion the point of departure for a fresh advance in the way of perfection ? Or is it nought, or very little more, than a matutinal ceremony, without much practical influence on the day that is to follow ? Worse still : do I interpose an

obstacle—some inordinate affection to which I blind myself—and so, more or less unconsciously, refuse to give myself entirely to Him who gives Himself unreservedly to me, and bravely die to myself for His sake who actually dies for mine? And, if my Communions are less fruitful, is the cause other than this?

And I have a further duty. It is customary for our Catholic congregations to make a solemn Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart on certain occasions. As a priest I recite this; as a religious or layman I assent to it by my presence. What is its purport? . . . *above all, we thank thee for the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Further, in reparation for the injuries and insults offered by ourselves and by others to thy most loving Heart in this adorable Sacrament, we hereby consecrate ourselves to thy Sacred Heart.* . . . (*Rit. serv.* p. 63.) I have then to make reparation for myself and others: how? By amending in myself all in which I have just owned myself to be deficient. I cannot actually console the Sacred Heart for, since the Crucifixion, He has had no need of it; but I can at least show my gratitude to Him who remains with me as perpetual companion, perpetual victim, perpetual spiritual nourishment; and, may I do so, not merely by saying to Him, Lord, Lord: but by doing the will of His Father who is in heaven. (Matt. vii. 21.)

XXVII

The Agony in the Garden

Of all the sorrowful mysteries in the life of our divine Lord, His Agony in the Garden is certainly the most extraordinary. That He should have permitted insult and violence to His Person, wonderful though it be, was but the logical sequence of the bloody Redemption decreed by His Father and freely accepted by Himself. But that He should have allowed a storm to sweep over His soul and, by so doing, descend from His habitual state of immovable calm to that of the perturbation and weakness natural to us, is a matter for amazement to the human mind and of scandal to human pride.

First Prelude.—The facts: After the Last Supper, Jesus and the eleven disciples go forth to Gethsemani, *where there was a garden.* (John xviii. 1.) Leaving eight of them near the gate, He takes Peter, James and John—who had assisted at the Transfiguration—a little further on; and bidding them: *Stay you here and watch with me* (Matt. xxvi. 38), goes forward alone. The solitary agony commences—violent even to the sweating of blood—twice interrupted by a return to the sleeping disciples, and terminated by the apparition of an angel, who strengthens the divine Sufferer without consoling Him. We draw a mental picture of the scene: an enclosure on the gentle slope of lower Mt. Olivet; the pale green foliage of the olive-trees shimmering in the cold, clear spring night; the glade to which Jesus withdraws.

SECOND PRELUDE.—I will ask that I may be enabled to make the internal sufferings of my Lord and Master my own; and thus arrive at an understanding of the practical lessons they convey.

I.—What Jesus suffered in His soul. Our Lord suffered in a threefold manner: from sadness, from fear, and from "heaviness," as Holy Scripture terms it.

(*a*) *He began to be sorrowful and to be sad.* (Matt. xxvi. 37.) Sorrowful He had been before—*e.g.*, at the tomb of Lazarus (John xi. 35), when He wept over Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41)—but now it was *even unto death.* (Matt. xxvi. 38.) And for many reasons: the obduracy of the Jews, their approaching crime, the treason of Judas, the only too apparent weakness of the remaining disciples; above all, the futility of His Blood for so many who would refuse to profit by it. *The waters are come in even unto my soul.* (Ps. lxviii. 2.)

(*b*) *And he began to fear.* (Mark xiv. 33.) Not with the fear that, seeing danger braces itself up to meet it; but the fear that abandons itself—the fear of the hunted animal. Human pride disavows such a feeling; but Jesus is afraid and admits it. First, for Himself: foreseeing the Passion in all its horrible details, He shrinks from it as an experience He has yet to undergo. But much more does He fear the anger of God and the divine justice. Understanding these as no one else can, He trembles for souls—for us.

(*c*) . . . *and to be heavy.* Here we understand the absolute mental and bodily prostration so graphically described by the Psalmist: *I am poured out like water; and all my bones are scattered. My heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws.* (Ps. xxi. 15-16.) That this was so is plain from what followed: *He fell upon his face* (Matt. xxvi. 39) *and his sweat became as drops of blood.* (Luke xxii. 44.)

Hitherto Jesus—who, as Man, has all the natural passions of one—has kept them all under complete control. Now, not only does He permit sorrow, fear and depression—which, strictly speaking, are weaknesses—to take possession of Him; but owns to them and causes them to be recorded of Himself. Why?

(1) Because: from now until the final *It is consummated* of to-morrow (John xix. 30) He represents all sin by becoming the universal sinner Himself in all save the guilt: *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Isa. liii. 6.) And therefore He accepts, not only the external consequences of sin but the internal consequences as well. To-morrow, as the universal malefactor, He will die for me: to-day, as the universal penitent, He sorrows for me. He makes His own the sorrow, the shame that should be mine if, after having committed sin, I knew how to appreciate what I had done: *that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God.* (Jer. ii. 19.) In my place He falls victim to the terror that should seize me when I reflect that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Heb. x. 31.) And I can explain His heaviness by the disgust, the indignation of heart that is caused in Him by the sin which is now one with Him: *We have thought him as it were a leper.* (Isa. liii. 4.) Further: Jesus, in becoming sin for us, becomes also malediction personified: *being made a curse for us.* (Gal. iii. 13.) Thus would He teach me—the actual sinner in will and deed—what the justice of God is; what the divine horror of sin.

(2) For our encouragement. Jesus was *tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.* (Heb. iv. 15.) We know He was impeccable; that even in His abandonment to sadness, fear and heaviness, He never passed the line beyond which sin begins. So would He teach us that feelings are not sinful in themselves; it is the will alone that can sin, by yielding to the

excessive or erroneous impressions born of them. Thus would He encourage those feeble and unquiet souls, who estimate everything by feelings and take feelings for sin. In this respect and in this measure does He *say to the fainthearted: Take courage and fear not.* (Isa. xxxv. 4.)

(3) For our consolation. Jesus would be subject to all my trials, because He would be *like unto his brethren* —like me—save only in sin and its guilt, *that he might become merciful* (Heb. ii. 17) and *have compassion on our infirmities.* (iv. 15.) Jesus was God and therefore mercy and compassion in all their perfection. But mercy and compassion, in the human sense, require a heart capable of suffering for and with the misdeeds or misfortunes of others; and the Heart of God, being impassible, is not so capable. Jesus, in becoming Man, became capable of mercy and compassion as man understands them, and would learn them as man learns them: by actual experience.

Here then I find both my encouragement and my consolation. Does it revolt me to be urged to desire poverty and humiliation? Well, I am only asked to do what He has done. He has assumed all my weaknesses and sustained all my trials in order to become actually more like me; and thereby encouraged me to *bear all things* and *endure all things* (1 Cor. xiii. 7) in order to become more like Him. This is the Third Degree of Humility in Him. If only I did not forget it sometimes!

And my consolation. If, when confronted with sorrow, fear and heaviness, Jesus had braved them, or behaved as one who did not appear to yield to them, I should admire without doubt, but should I be consoled or confounded? Gethsemani has changed everything. Thenceforth I can lay open my sadness, my fear or my heaviness to Him, as to one who has endured them all Himself—*the man of sorrows and acquainted with*

infirmity (Isa. liii. 3)—confident that they will be understood, not by the omniscience of God but by the Sacred Heart of Him who, to this end, deigned to appear in the Garden less strong than many of His own martyrs, and even than many heroes of human history.

II.—What Jesus did, and what He teaches us to do :—

First : He makes no change in His habits. He does not leave the Cenacle until the hymn prescribed by the Jewish ritual has been said. (Matt. xxvi. 30.) He goes to Gethsemani *according to his custom* (Luke xxii. 39), knowing full well that Judas is aware of this resort (John xviii. 2) and will lead his band thither.

This, in all probability, suggested to St. Ignatius his rule for times of trial : *In time of desolation no change should be made.* When desolation comes upon us, all practices of piety, however welcome at other times, become distasteful and burdensome. But abandonment —even partial—means capitulation of the will to feelings. Conversely : perseverance—albeit partial and even mechanical—is a triumph of will over feelings : God satisfied ; all gained. That is the least we can do.

But St. Ignatius would not have us remain content with *resisting* the enemy : we must *overthrow* him—and this by acting directly contrary to what the feelings suggest. The position the enemy will first endeavour to carry is that of our prayer and pious practices. In time of desolation, prayer seems not only distasteful but interminable. Then is the time to insist and even prolong it a little—thus defeating the devil on ground of his own choosing. *And being in an agony, he prayed the longer.* (Luke xxii. 43.)

And I : how am I to pray or meditate—I, who cannot put two ideas together ? Pray as Jesus did : without reasoning or discussion. He repeated Himself patiently and perseveringly : *prayed the third time, saying the selfsame word.* (Matt. xxvi. 44.) What

hinders me from repeating fifty or a hundred times in the hour: *Have mercy on me, O God.* (Ps. l. 3)? A poor prayer this perhaps! but the best prayer is that in which one feels that one can do nothing, and that God can do everything. (*St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.*) Blessed Isaac Jogues, reduced by torture and hunger to a state bordering on idiocy, traced a cross on a tree and sat looking at it—motionless and almost thinking of nothing. And I, depressed and desolate though I be, can do the same with my crucifix for an hour or even a few minutes beyond. Jesus remained firm under the trial of desolation: He acted and reacted. Let me do the same with His help!

Man, in desolation or distress and thrown back upon himself, instinctively yearns for the moral support of a fellow-man—even a silent companion will suffice, so he is sympathetic. Jesus is a true Man and owns to this craving. *My soul is sorrowful even unto death. Stay you here and watch with me.* (Matt. xxvi. 38.) Twice did He return to ask this affectionate sympathy, and twice was it denied to Him. He begins by gently complaining of it: *Simon, sleepest thou?* (Mark xiv. 37.) *What? Could you not watch one hour with me?* (Matt. xxvi. 40.) Even then He is more concerned for them than for Himself: He reads them a lesson on which I have already meditated in regard to St. Peter. But who can doubt that He suffers from this abandonment? He avowed it beforehand by the voice of the Psalmist: *I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.* (Ps. lxviii. 21.) And only an hour ago He had predicted this defection: *Behold the hour cometh . . . that you shall leave me alone.* (John xvi. 32.)

And what does He do? The first time He complains, the second He is silent; but, each time, far from seeking consolation in self-pity or mute reproaches,

Jesus betakes Himself to dry, hard prayer. He returns to His Father, who is very really with Him, though He shows but an angry countenance—seeing in Him nought but the sinner. Let me not aspire to be more perfect than Jesus : let me seek human sympathy. I shall always find less than I could wish, sometimes none at all. Then, far from desponding, I will return me obstinately to God. Even then I shall be less destitute than Jesus. He had only His Father ; I have not only this same Father but Jesus Himself, who will understand from His own experience in the Garden the full bitterness of abandonment.

A last lesson. Human consolation failing Him, Jesus accepts succour from elsewhere. *And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.* (Luke xxii. 43.) He who could call to His assistance *more than twelve legions of angels* (Matt. xxvi. 53) is reduced to accepting the ministrations of one. But that one has been sent by heaven, and Jesus recognizes His Father in His envoy : He bows before the celestial messenger, listens respectfully to him—venerating the office he holds. And I ? To whom shall I betake myself in my hours of moral agony ? To a stranger ? No : save only in very exceptional circumstances. To one of my religious brethren ? That is permissible ; for at least my sorrowful confidences will go no further. But : first and for preference, let me seek the visible angel delegated by God for this ministry—my superior or the spiritual father. They have grace given them to fulfil the duties of their position, and this grace will avail me more than sympathy or personal qualities.

And is it consolation I am to expect from them ? Not necessarily—it is strength to sustain my will amid the storm of feelings. To Jesus Himself the angel brought no more : *strengthening him.* And, amid the horrors of the Passion that followed, we know what a peaceful, intrepid and majestic front He, who deigned

to lie prostrate in the Garden, presented to the scribes, judges, the populace and the executioners. And though, in the Garden, He deigned to countenance all our innocent human weaknesses by sharing them, His sovereign will ever held firm. And He has also deigned to show me by example where lies the source of the strength to which I ought to aspire.

CONCLUSION.—I compare THEN and NOW, mark the difference between them, and ask the reason of it. There was a time when Jesus *rejoiced in the Holy Ghost* (Luke x. 21) ; and had the confident assurance of being always heard by His Father. (John xi. 42.) Then it was : *What things soever he (the Father) doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner.* (John v. 19.) And He who had declared that *I and the Father are ONE* (John x. 30), now kneels before Him trembling and abashed. And my conscience tells me why. In the Garden Jesus is taking my place : He is now (except in guilt) the sinner I am myself ; the penitent I ought to be. And I will ask that He, *who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard for his reverence* (Heb. v. 7), will obtain for me from the Eternal Father a true consciousness of the sin that is really mine, together with the fear of that divine justice which was so terrible to Him.

Again : Once our divine Lord sought after His baptism of blood with eagerness : *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized. And how am I straitened until it be accomplished ?* (Luke xii. 50.) But, as Gethsemani draws near, natural repugnance seems to take possession of Him : *Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour.* (John xii. 27.) And, in the Garden : *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.* (Matt. xxvi. 39.) Here I learn that there is no want of confidence, nor

even imperfection, in feeling and even giving expression to the natural repugnance we all have for suffering. Provided always : that we end like He did, by doing the will of God : *If this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done.* (42.) And I will give thanks to Him who so thoroughly proved the reality of His human nature by showing Himself so evidently like unto me, subject to all my trials as a man : *tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.* (Heb. iv. 15.)

XXVIII

The Passion
(First Meditation)

Since we have to compress the entire Spiritual Exercises into the brief space of eight days, we are compelled to confine ourselves to a general review of the Passion of our Lord. This, for the sake of bringing the matter within manageable limits, we will make in two meditations. And, following the order pursued in the meditation on the *Agony in the Garden,* we will first consider what Jesus suffered.

Preludes.—The history of the facts and composition of place will suggest themselves as the meditation proceeds. If I must have something definite on which to fix my attention, let me take a Calvary, the *Ecce Homo*—my crucifix even will suffice. For the third prelude, I will repeat that of the *Agony in the Garden,* viz., that I may be enabled to make the internal sufferings of my Lord and Master my own ; and thus arrive at a practical understanding of the lessons they convey.

I.—First, let us remind ourselves of the wholly exceptional position of the Victim. The ordinary sufferer—martyr even—while he knows that torment awaits him, is ignorant of its precise nature or details. Jesus knows all. Not only this, but, as God, He has foreseen, sanctioned and decreed the whole cruel programme from eternity. And, while there is no alleviation in

this, there are two further facts that tend to increase His suffering. (1) As *perfect Man* (*Creed of St. Athanasius*), He is dowered with the most exquisite sensibility, and therefore capable of feeling physical pain with the utmost acuteness. Nor does He permit any detail of suffering to pass, *e.g.*, *They gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh. But he took it not* (Mark xv. 23)—thus refusing the customary potion given in order to stupefy condemned criminals. (2) What moral nature was ever more delicate and better adapted to appreciate injustice, ingratitude and outrage than His ? Further : Jesus knows that He came from God and will return to God ; He has the full consciousness of His dignity and His rights ; nor can it fail Him during the entire course of the Passion ; and His sufferings must needs be more intense in consequence. We consider :—

I.—His bodily sufferings. We remember that, on the evening of Thursday, Jesus suffered from sadness, fear and abandonment to such a degree as to produce entire mental and bodily prostration ; in which state He was arrested, bound, and dragged to the house of Caiphas. Here He endured blows and violence at the hands of, not only servants but members of the Sanhedrin themselves. And, after a night passed without either food or sleep, and still in bonds which, by this time, must have become intolerable, He enters upon the sufferings of Good Friday.

Next follows the Flagellation. We have no need of special revelations—venerable though they be—to imagine that atrocity. Pilate had sought to move the Jews to pity ; his subalterns outdid themselves in zeal ; and both failed of their object. Can we suppose the pain ceased with the last blow ? Rather was it then that it became more acute—rendering every movement, every touch even, an agony. And yet there were to be found men so utterly callous to human suffering as to

treat the sacred Body as though it had been made of stone and incapable of feeling.

After which the Crowning with Thorns, and blows of the reed with which the soldiers forced it on to the head of our divine Lord.

Then the sufferings of Jesus on the way to Calvary. We can form some conception of the probable dimensions and weight of the Cross from the fact that it had to be planted in the ground and sustain the weight of a man's body. It must be long, massive and consequently heavy—a difficult burden for a criminal in full vigour. Manifestly, in the state to which Jesus has been reduced, He is unable to carry, but is compelled to drag it—with resulting suffering at each inequality in the ground. Easy to understand how the executioners —fearing their prisoner would die on the way—requisitioned the services of a stranger. It may be that this stranger—Simon, the Cyrenian—responded to their summons with shame and vexation. We may hope he continued his services with commiseration and ended them with love !

Calvary is reached : Jesus still lives to suffer further. Does the crucifixion take place on the ground, or on the Cross erected in position ? Horrible in either case ; but is what follows less so ? Suspended by simple cords, the condition of the crucified would speedily become unbearable. Jesus is nailed : He lives thus for three hours; powerless to move even if the attempt were possible, consumed with fever and parched with thirst.

And now we can apply to our Lord on His Cross the words a Prophet once applied to the people of God : *From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein : wounds and bruises and swelling sores. They are not bound up, nor dressed, nor fomented with oil* (Isa. i. 6) ; *no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him . . . a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity . . . as it were a leper.* (liii. 2-4.) In

becoming Man, the Word had said to the Father: *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not; but a body thou hast fitted to me.* (Heb. x. 5.) The Father has fitted to Him the flesh of a man: behold what Jesus has willed to do with it! What do I do with mine? My body is a prison, from which I must needs free myself by—at least—a sufficient mortification. It is a temple that I ought to purify and sanctify, *i.e.*, mortify myself still more. It is an instrument to be reserved for legitimate and apostolic purposes, neither more nor less. Beyond this unique interest of the greater glory of God, it is a victim I ought to immolate: in order to repay the sacrifices of Jesus Christ by love; in order to make it actually and effectively like His. I look at Him on the Cross: I compare myself with Him . . . Alas!

II.—What Jesus suffered in His honour. Once again we remind ourselves that Jesus, knowing that He is God, has the full consciousness of His dignity and His rights. We consider therefore:—

What He suffered at the hands of Judas and the priests. They haggle and bargain over Him, and end by agreeing on thirty pieces of silver—a hundred francs, according to Fr. Knabenbauer, S.J. That is the value at which they assess the Saviour of the world! Perhaps the priests think it excessive, but Judas thinks it reasonable: *the price of him that was prized, whom they prized of the children of Israel.* (Matt. xxvii. 9.)

He is arrested with insulting precautions, which He Himself emphasizes: *You are come out, as it were to a robber, with swords and clubs to apprehend me.* (Matt. xxvi. 55.) And they pinion Him, like a desperate malefactor from whom violence is to be expected. Judas had warned the priests to *hold him fast* (Matt. xxvi. 48); and their servants *took Jesus and bound him.* (John xviii. 12.)

We reconstruct the scene in the house of Caiphas: the members of the Sanhedrin on their high seats, Jesus below in the dock with downcast gaze. All eyes converge on Him, eyes *full of rage . . . shooting horrible sparks.* (Wisd. xi. 19.) *The whole council sought false witness against Jesus . . . and they found not.* At length they find two (Matt. xxvi. 59, 60), whose testimony *did not agree.* (Mark xiv. 59.) And when He refers the high priest to those who had heard His doctrine, *one of the servants gave Jesus a blow* (John xviii. 22)—an insult for which worldly honour demands blood! Then, the sitting having been suspended, our Lord is left to the caprices of the attendants, who spit in His face, blindfold Him and, striking Him, say: *Prophesy unto us, O Christ. Who is he that struck thee?* (Matt. xxvi. 68.) And Jesus has a human heart and human feelings!

Calumny: contempt. *Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy,* says the high priest. (Matt. xxvi. 65.) *If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee,* say the Jews to Pilate. (John xviii. 30.) *Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said . . .* (Matt. xxvii. 63.) He is a revolutionary: *We have found this man perverting our nation.* (Luke xxiii. 2.) These at least do Jesus the honour of hating Him: but Herod! To this worldly trifler—less wicked than frivolous, but become wicked by sheer force of frivolity—Jesus appears to be a professor of spiritualism, an accomplished medium capable of affording a morning's entertainment to the court. When Jesus declines to pander to their curiosity, they treat Him as a fool unworthy of serious consideration: *And Herod with his army set him at nought and mocked him, putting on him a white garment: and sent him back to Pilate.* (Luke xxiii. 11.)

Meanwhile Jesus is sinking lower and lower in popular opinion—the same popular opinion that so influences

me ! This is how it shows itself : *They cried all again : Not this man, but Barabbas.* Which is the more ignominious : that the multitudes who, only last Sunday, *held him as a prophet* (Matt. xxi. 46), should be called on to vote upon Him to-day ; or, that He should be placed in the opposite scale to Barabbas, who *was a robber.* (John xviii. 40) ?

Thus far the outrages have been confined to the Jews ; now it is the turn of the Roman soldiery. These vest Him in a scarlet cloak, crown Him with thorns and put a reed in His right hand for a sceptre. Double contumely here : they trample upon a man already broken and helpless, and give vent to their scorn for the whole Jewish nation at the same time : *bowing the knees before him, they mocked him, saying : Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed and struck his head.* (Matt. xxvii. 29, 30.)

The crowd have not enjoyed this interlude behind closed doors ; but they see the results of it at least ; for Pilate presents Jesus to them, as we see Him in the *Ecce Homo.* Three times this day has Jesus been exhibited in public procession across Jerusalem : from Caiphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod ; the *Ecce Homo* is the preliminary to the last : the road to Calvary.

Where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst. (John xix. 18.) The Pharisees are seen wagging their heads ; their laughter, their sarcasms, their defiances rise upon the ear. The Psalmist had heard it all centuries before : *All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn ; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him : let him save him, seeing he delighteth in him.* (Ps. xxi. 8-9.) And the Evangelist on the spot confirms the prophetic utterance : *They that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying . . . Save thy own self. If thou be the Son of*

God, come down from the cross. (Matt. xxvii. 39, 40.) Most aptly again does the Psalmist depict Him as encircled by infuriated beasts: *Many calves have surrounded me; fat bulls have besieged me. They have opened their mouths against me, as a lion ravening and roaring* (Ps. xxi. 13, 14); for, on Calvary, the human beast, foolishly proud and voluntarily cruel is indeed unchained. And when the beast that lies dormant in human nature is let loose, his delight is to humiliate and cause suffering—to trample on soul and body alike.

And now we combine the two: bodily suffering and humiliation. Jesus is now nothing more than one vast wound; the brief span of life that remains to Him holds nought else than acute and intolerable suffering. He will die as a false prophet in the eyes of the world, an impostor unmasked, a sacrilegious wretch convicted and punished—*the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.* (Ps. xxi. 7.) He is not only a Man of sorrows, but *the* Man of sorrows; past-master in the science of infirmity. Such proficiency supposes an apprenticeship; and the apprenticeship of Jesus did not commence on the Cross, though it was completed and crowned there. And I—priest, religious, simple layman even—am I to remain a stranger to this science, and refuse even to enter upon this apprenticeship of combined suffering and humiliation? He suffered willingly: I suffer unwillingly and only as by force—because I must! He accepted humiliation, went out to meet it: I seek to avoid it; and when it comes chafe under it and repine!

Finally: Behold the Heart which has so loved men! There would be something wanting to the completeness of the Passion, if the Sacred Heart—like the flesh and honour of the Man-God—had not its appropriate suffering. We recall briefly what we have already considered in the Garden:—

This suffering comes to Him from all quarters : from the Jewish people who rejected Him, and in so doing effected their own rejection : *I have spread forth my hands all the day to an unbelieving people.* (Isa. lxv. 2.) It comes to Him from all the souls whom He foresees will imitate the blindness and supernatural suicide of the Jews. What anguish for the Sacred Heart to see itself ignored, derided, repaid with hatred and finally repulsed. It comes to Him through those He had *chosen out of the world* (John xv. 19)—His Apostles—who sold, denied and forsook Him. It comes to Him through the sufferings of His holy Mother. And the most grievous blow comes from heaven itself—from His Father, who refuses Him all consolation and seems to have abandoned Him entirely : *Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying : My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* (Matt. xxvii. 46.) Has not the Sacred Heart merited the cult of reparation for which He asks by the voice of His servant Margaret Mary ?

Conclusion.—And all this for me ! These torments, these opprobriums, these bitternesses, these abandonments : He suffers them in my place and by my own act ; He suffers them for love of me. And what shall I do when suffering or humiliation is offered to me ? Shall I *go back and walk no more with him ?* (John vi. 67.) Shall I, like Simon, be *forced to take up his cross ?* (Matt. xxvii. 32.) Rather let me say : *Whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go : and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell* (Ruth i. 16) : for, *it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.* (Matt. x. 25.)

XXIX

The Passion
(Second Meditation)

Having considered what our divine Lord suffered, we have now to meditate on what He did, and why.

Preludes.—The history will suggest itself as the facts pass in review. For a composition of place, the *Ecce Homo* or my crucifix, as before. In the third prelude I will ask for a better understanding of the great lesson of the Passion ; and that I may see clearly how Christ put the divine strategy of the *Kingdom* and the *Two Standards* into practice Himself before urging it upon me. Lord Jesus, who wert so much humiliated and suffered so greatly for me, give me an earnest and sincere desire of humiliation and suffering for you !

I.—To all outward appearance, Jesus did nothing whatever. He was entirely passive, and in two ways :—

(*a*) *He delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.* (1 Pet. ii. 23.) In the Garden there had been three manifestations of His power : the myrmidons of the chief priests thrown down by a word : *As soon therefore as he had said to them : I am he ; they went backward and fell to the ground* (John xviii. 6) ; Malchus healed by a gesture : *And when he had touched his ear, he healed him* (Luke xxii. 51) ; the flight of the Apostles guaranteed by formal command : *If therefore you seek me, let these go their way.* (John xviii. 8.) Thereafter the power of Jesus appeared to cease : *I have given my*

body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them: I have not turned away my face from them that rebuke me and spit upon me. (Isa. l. 6.)

(*b*) *Jesus held his peace.* (Matt. xxvi. 63.) He was silent for the most part; and always when it was a question of His own defence. Here and there a brief word in the interests of others or of God; an attempt to awaken the consciences of the priests and Pilate; a few words to the weeping women of Jerusalem, of prayer for His executioners, of consolation to the penitent thief, to bequeathe us to His holy Mother. Once only does His voice rise and become majestic: when Caiphas interrogates Him as to His office of Messiah and His divine filiation. Here the supreme truth is at stake, and the Accused speaks loud and clear, with full consciousness that He is signing His own death-warrant by so doing. Apart from that, no word of defence or apology. Caiphas is irritated; Pilate *wondered exceedingly*. (Matt. xxvii. 14.)

II.—But when we enter upon the domain of faith, and view this outward inaction either in (1) its own light, or (2) in that of its effects, it becomes plain that it was in reality an activity of the most potent and enduring nature, for:—

(1) Christ only offered Himself because He willed it, and as far as He willed it: *He was offered because it was his own will.* (Isa. liii. 7.) The Jews appeared to deprive Him of life and honour alike; they thought they did do so, nor did they spare any pains to that end. Not so: rather was it the Victim who took them away from Himself: *I lay down my life . . . no man taketh it away from me: but I lay it down of myself.* (John x. 17, 18.) Is not submissiveness of this kind action, and heroic action against all the tendencies of nature? The submissiveness of the martyrs was admirable, but it was passive—the patient acceptance of the circum-

stances in which they found themselves, *i.e.*, the sufferings God permitted man to inflict upon them. That of Jesus was more real and admirable still, since He was the First Cause and sovereign Ordainer of all that was done against Himself.

(2) The divine Sufferer, by His very passivity and self-abandonment, achieves effects beyond all human power :—

(*a*) As regards hell : He conquers and triumphs. At the time of His coming the service of God had become material and formal—more concerned about minor external observances than the interior worship of the heart, *e.g.*, eating with publicans and sinners (Mark ii.16), with unwashed hands (vii. 2), scrupulosity over trifling tithes, to the neglect of judgment and charity (Luke xi. 42), and so on. It was also regarded as a means to political freedom : *It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not* (John xi. 50) ; *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?* (Acts i. 6.) Christ, by His own example, had shown that the perfect life is not impossible and, to help man to lead it, instituted sacraments—all deriving their efficacy from the Blood He shed so lavishly and unresistingly. Thus He places salvation within the reach of all who will accept it—many of whom might otherwise be lost : *despoiling the principalities and powers (of darkness) . . . triumphing over them in himself.* (Col. ii. 15.)

(*b*) As regards man. He completes and crowns His rôle of universal sinner and ransom : *Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree.* (1 Pet. ii. 24.) And it was in thus bearing them that He took them away : *Behold him who taketh away the sin of the world.* (John i. 29) ; *blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us . . . fastening it to the cross.* (Col. ii. 14.)

(*c*) As regards God. In permitting Himself to be

reviled and tormented, Jesus realizes a work impossible to humanity in its entirety. He avenges, satisfies and glorifies the divine sanctity by a homage as infinite in value as itself: *Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come.* (Heb. x. 6, 7.)

(*d*) As regards God and man, considered in their mutual relations. By suffering and dying Christ restores peace between heaven and earth: *making peace through the blood of his cross, both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven.* (Col. i. 20.) As Priest He offers the unique Sacrifice, prefigured by the legal sacrifices of the Old Law and continued by that of the New Law, to be offered always and everywhere throughout the world. (Mal. i. 11.) And He offers it by permitting it, *i.e.*, by immolating Himself. And as He: *by his own blood, entered once into the Holies* (Heb. ix. 12), *even within the veil* (vi. 19), and in His personal Humanity resumed by conquest the glory that was already His by nature; so our entire humanity enters, after Him, into a supernatural union with God—by grace here and glory hereafter.

Further: it was on Calvary that Christ could say in effect what He had said in anticipation at the Last Supper: *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* (John xvii. 4.) The work is complete: *It is consummated* (xix. 30); and from it I learn my final lesson—for there will be no other.

I learn from the Passion what pride and sensuality—with the honour and pleasure that minister to them—are worth in the light of eternity. When our Lord foretold the ignominy of the Passion and all its sufferings, the Apostles themselves *understood none of these things.* (Luke xviii. 34.) So it is with the world to-day; so it may be with me. The world deifies honour and elevates pleasure to the rank of a devotion; but *Christ crucified* is *unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-*

block, and to the Gentiles foolishness. (1 Cor. i. 23.) Yet there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved than that of Jesus, once despised and calumniated. (Acts iv. 12.) And as Christ only entered into His glory by *suffering these things* (Luke xxiv. 26), so I have to enter into mine, not by the way of honour and pleasure but by imitating Him *who, when he was reviled, did not revile : when he suffered, he threatened not* (1 Pet. ii. 23), and, in the last extremity, being content to *be hated by all men for my name's sake.* (Matt. x. 22.)

Then, Christ in His own Person has conquered the two great concupiscences of pride and sensuality : *despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open shew, triumphing over them in himself.* (Col. ii. 15.) Though these two great concupiscences were not in Him, but only in me ; if He teaches me the art of overcoming them and inspires me with courage to do so, it is He *that triumphs over them in himself.* And how ? By permitting—causing even—Himself to be treated as if my two concupiscences were actually in Him, to the extent of being the proudest and most sensual of men ; and having my need of their indispensable antidotes : suffering and humiliation. And by triumphing over them actually in Himself, He triumphs over them virtually for me—since He gives me the secret of victory, the stimulant of His own example and proof of His love that appeals to my own ; since He obtains for me the grace of courage necessary to triumph over myself. I have need to mortify my flesh, well then, let me look at His. I have need to subdue my desire for honour : let me see what He does for His own.

His humiliations. In the few hours that intervened between His arrest and His death, Jesus loses all His prestige—voluntarily and without an effort to save it. Last Sunday it was : *Hosanna to the son of David*

(Matt. xxi. 9); now it is: *Away with him: crucify him.* (John xix. 15.) Inconstancy of a crowd perhaps; but does He not ruin Himself, as if designedly, in public estimation?

Let us imagine the case of some well-disposed Jew—just, devout, awaiting *the consolation of Israel.* (Luke ii. 25.) This man has heard much and seen something of Jesus—perhaps assisted at one of His miracles. He is inclined to recognize Him as the Messiah and, carried away by enthusiasm, has joined in the triumphal procession of Palm Sunday. And now? He follows with a pained interest the arrest, trials and condemnation of Jesus. Behold the self-styled Prophet disgraced by the leaders of the nation, abandoned by His friends, but—above all—abandoning Himself. What is he to think? Can he believe that this utter self-abandonment is voluntary—part of the great secret that confounds even me? If Jesus does not defend Himself, it is evident that He has no defence to make; if He be silent it must be that conscience seals His lips. And the miracles? Diabolical prodigies no doubt; as the scribes say: *By the prince of the devils he casteth out devils.* (Mark iii. 22.) Then, his natural indignation at having been duped leads him to cry with the crowd: *Not this man, but Barabbas*—and rightly so to his mind, for is not religious imposture the worst form of imposture and far worse than robbery? And then we suppose this Jew to ascend to Calvary and hear the cry: *He saved others: himself he cannot save.* (Matt. xxvii. 42.) Would not the logic of the situation probably put an end to any faith this man might once have had? The Apostles themselves, though fully warned, were severely shaken in their belief in the Master: *But we hoped that it was he that should have redeemed Israel.* (Luke xxiv. 21.) Here was the work of three years in ruins! And what had ruined it but the silence and self-abandonment of the Victim Himself?

But faith and the visible outcome supply the twofold key to the problem. He who confounds me by abandoning Himself thus is the typical sinner, sin made man; and He would, in this manner, teach me that sin is so great an evil that it deserves the very worst that can happen—opprobrium, suffering, death. He is also the King of the *Standards*, the royal and divine Professor of practical humility. He could read the future and knew, first: that in relinquishing His honour He was already rendering His Father a supereminent glory and, secondly: that if He appeared to lose His grasp of souls for the moment, His Cross would draw them all to Himself eventually. (John xii. 32.) And because of our limitations—incapable of taking in everything at the same time—Jesus, in His Passion, sacrifices everything to the great lesson of humility. No step in virtue, fidelity, towards salvation even, without habitual suppression of the proud SELF under the all-powerful hand of God. Nor any humility without humiliation—at least accepted: no mastership without a normal apprenticeship. And this apprenticeship He, the King of the *Standards*, would make and push to the utmost possible limit. Not that He had need of it for Himself. As Son of God, He knew not how to be humble; as Son of man, He was necessarily and perfectly so. And as, in order to become compassionate, merciful in the human sense, He subjected Himself to the austere discipline of suffering; so, in order to learn humility normally, He passed through the rough school of humiliation: *And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.* (Heb. v. 8.) No obedience without humility, and humility is the indispensable condition of obedience: *the habitual disposition to obey the law of God in all things.* (xxiv. First Degree of Humility.)

In order then that I may learn humility more easily, Jesus learns it Himself, and by the only method by

which it is to be learned : actual experience of humiliation : He drinks of the chalice of humiliation to the dregs. At the moment of His Passion, He wills no more than that, sees nought but that, and for that He compromises and sacrifices everything else. Men will be scandalized, lose somewhat of their faith in Him : that does not matter. Scandal will pass, faith will revive, and the lesson will remain as the eternal patrimony of souls. Souls must understand the royal road to virtue, to heaven ; the unique method of humility. And He calls me to follow Him in the path He trod Himself : *Whither I go you know : and the way you know.* (John xiv. 4.)

Colloquy.—I contemplate my divine Lord on the Cross in torment ; more than all, in the last extremity of ignominy. And, should I ask : " How has this come about, Lord ; and, being what you are, why have you come to this—and by your own voluntary act ? Why this passivity, this silence that compromises, dishonours and condemns you ? " And the reply will be : " I would teach you humility ; I would be made in all things like unto my brethren (Heb. ii. 17) : for love of you."

Then I interrogate myself in turn. What have I done for Jesus Christ hitherto ? What ought I to do ? What do I wish to do, with His help ?

I look at Him and compare : He, the Creator on the Cross, *suffering all these things* for me : I, the creature —Catholic, priest, religious perhaps—on my knees before Him. What have I done as yet in the sense of the Third Degree of Humility ? My own conscience will answer for me. What shall I do henceforth ?

XXX

FOURTH WEEK

The Resurrection

It is consummated. (John xix. 30.) Such is a comprehensive description of the state of affairs in Jerusalem on the evening of the first Good Friday.

Caiphas and his following are triumphant. The hated Nazarene is dead and done with! He was confident of rising again the third day, His friends say. Well, His impotence of to-day has discounted that fiction. As to any possible fraud: the sepulchre is sealed and guarded —we have seen to that! We have struggled for close on three years and won. *It is consummated.*

And Pilate? A little uneasy perhaps at the sorrowful silence of his wife (Matt. xxvii. 19); but more disdainful and rancorous than ever in regard to the Jews. On the whole, however, a good administrative day's work. A rising avoided; a reconciliation with Herod effected. (Luke xxiii. 12.) Unfortunate that an innocent man should have been done to death; but high policy has no room for scruples. His own priests, I hear, said: *What is that to us?* (Matt. xxvii. 4.) Quite so! If they are not concerned, I need not be. So now for my report to Cæsar.

The populace, while wholly astonished, are yet undecided. The best among them find courage to avow that a frightful crime has been committed, and return from Calvary *striking their breasts.* (Luke xxiii. 48.) But time will bring forgetfulness; and meanwhile there

are their own affairs to be attended to: *The just perisheth and no man layeth it to heart.* (Isa. lvii. 1.) After the death of Jesus the world goes its way with very much the same indifference that it will after my own!

The disciples? Where are they and the little group of believers, now that the Shepherd has been smitten? (Zach. xiii. 7.) Dispersed, fearful, in hiding, without hope, unable even to think. This then is the end of the great Prophet, of His work, of the restoration of Israel! *It is consummated.*

And for Jesus also: *It is consummated.* At the very instant He lays down His life, His soul re-enters into the full and sensible possession of its glory. Its divinity, so lately eclipsed and as if paralysed, reasserts itself. The countenance of the Father is no longer averted and implacable. Jesus is no longer the typical sinner: He is the Son once more—the beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. (Matt. iii. 17.) *It is consummated.*

PRELUDES.—The history of the facts. When Jesus yielded up His blessed soul into the hands of His Eternal Father, He descended to Limbo—the place where the Just who had died before His coming were detained. On the morning of the third day, His soul was reunited to His Body, now glorified and impassible; and He came forth from the sepulchre in which He had been laid after the Crucifixion. And I will ask that the intense joy of Christ Himself, together with that of the citizens of Limbo and all faithful souls upon earth, may be my own—in anticipation of the day when I shall be of their company in heaven.

I.—We descend to Limbo in imagination. A vast temple of imposing but severe architecture; a faint but cheerful light; an atmosphere healthful and

invigorating. There we see souls without number, as if visible in corporeal form. These are the souls of the Just of the Old Law : souls of Israel, souls of Gentiles, *simple and upright, and fearing God, and avoiding evil,* like Job, for example. (Job i. 1.) Souls of Pagans, numerous perhaps—God grant it !—possibly of such or such a one whose history we know, whose writings we read. In short, the soul of every one who quitted this world in the grace of God and had passed of necessity through the temporary expiations of purgatory —all who, in fact, and in varying degrees, were sanctified by the anticipated merits of the Redeemer, more or less explicitly known or foreseen. To-day, all these Just know Him equally : Jews who found Him in their Holy Books, Gentiles who became proselytes to Israel by the same means—all are welded into one people. Here, as later, *is no distinction of the Jew and the Greek* (Rom. x. 12), neither *Barbarian nor Scythian* (Col. iii. 11) ; but all adore the same God and await His Christ to come. Outside Limbo and its antechamber, purgatory, remains only hell, the everlasting abode of the people God knows not.

And life in Limbo ? No more temptation, no more sin, no more sorrow or fear. Limbo is a place of waiting —but waiting in security and therefore peaceful ; of desire—ardent but sure of its object and consequently free from suffering. Land of hope too—not that *deferred hope* that *afflicteth the soul* (Prov. xiii. 12), but that which brings joy : *rejoicing in hope.* (Rom. xii. 12.) On earth life is one of uncertainty ; that in Limbo is not. To desire with love, await with certitude, implore with confidence: such constitutes life in Limbo.

Centuries come and go, and now the time approaches. Who can tell but at the hour of the Nativity an angel was deputed to announce in Limbo the *tidings of great joy?* (Luke ii. 10.) In any event, there come there those who have seen with their eyes, and whose hands

had handled the Word of Life (1 John i. 1)—and assuredly God did not seal their lips. Thither comes Simeon, lately dismissed in peace after having seen the salvation of the Lord. (Luke ii. 29.) Then Joseph, foster-father of Jesus arrives. Perhaps it is from him that the Just learn the mystery of the miraculous conception and virginal birth—why not? He narrates the history of the infancy, boyhood and laborious life of the Carpenter of Nazareth. After him comes John the Baptist, who tells of the baptism of Jesus, of the sign from heaven vouchsafed to him: *And I saw: and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God.* (John i. 34.)

One day, Moses and Elias suddenly quit the assembly. Soon they reappear: they have been to Thabor to assist at the Transfiguration; and doubtless give the same account of it as St. Peter did later: We make known to you the power and presence on earth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen His splendour from close to. From the midst of a magnificent glory a celestial voice came, that of God, who proclaimed Him His Son. And this we have seen and heard when we were with Him in the holy mount. (2 Pet. i.) No doubt they also tell of the conversation they have had with Jesus Himself: as to how the Lord will soon leave the earth, where and in what manner. (Luke ix. 31.)

Other souls, too, have disappeared from Limbo, but without returning: the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim. Then, another day, a potent voice resounds: *Lazarus, come forth*; and Lazarus, obedient to the summons, departs. (John xi. 43.)

Suddenly, about the ninth hour of Good Friday, the pale light of Limbo becomes a dazzling day. As in the Holy City there is neither sun nor moon, for the Lamb is the light thereof (Apoc. xxi. 23), so it is here. A new Soul, resplendent with glory, has arrived in Limbo: the Redeemer Himself come to visit His elect. He has finished the work His Father gave Him to do (John

xvii. 4) ; overcome the world (John xvi. 33) ; and now holds the keys of death and hell. (Apoc. i. 18.)

Thus Limbo becomes a paradise—the paradise promised to the good thief only an hour or two since. (Luke xxiii. 43.) The good thief himself arrives shortly after his Lord and fellow-sufferer and wholly overwhelmed at his good fortune. Christ, who came to earth to call sinners (Matt. ix. 13), has, from His Cross, commenced to draw all things to Himself (John xii. 32) ; and here is His first conquest. And then, in Limbo as in heaven, *there is joy upon one sinner that doeth penance.* (Luke xv. 7.)

And now the entire palace of souls becomes a court, at which each in turn is presented to his King. In the midst, Jesus, gracious and beautiful, and in a lowly place, as we saw Him in the *Two Standards*, receives the homage of the Just. First comes Adam, and Eve follows him—we cannot imagine our First Parents among the Lost ! Perhaps both prostrate themselves in silence, while all Limbo takes up the refrain : " O happy fault, that merited to have such and so great a Redeemer ! " Abel, whose blood once cried for vengeance (Gen. iv. 10) salutes Him whose Blood appeals better than his own. (Heb. xii. 24.) Abraham claims his Lord as the Son of his race in whom all nations of the earth are blessed. (Gen. xxii. 18.) Isaac, willing victim of the Old Law (Gen. xxii. 12), adores this Victim of the New Law, in whose behalf His heavenly Father had refused to intervene. Joseph—he of the Old Law—upon whom Pharaoh had once conferred the title of *saviour of the world* (Gen. xli. 45), now yields it up to its rightful possessor. Moses recognizes and adores the sovereign Prophet, foretold by himself, like unto himself (Deut. xviii. 15), but greater—the Son who is in the house of God as in His own right. (Heb. iii. 5, 6.) David venerates in Him, both a scion of his house and a Lord to whom the Lord once said : *Sit thou at my*

right hand. (Ps. cix. 1.) All the prophets bear testimony that He of whom they spoke is He in whose presence they now stand. And when the Innocents of Bethlehem draw nigh, the good Master doubtless receives them with : *Suffer the little children to come unto me,* as He did those other children who still remain on earth. (Mark x. 14.)

And last of all, as we may suppose, John the Baptist and St. Joseph approach. The first, companion of his Lord's earliest years on earth ; later His Precursor, commissioned to *go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways* (Luke i. 76) ; the greatest man of the Old Testament. (Matt. xi. 11.) The second, Joseph, the *just man* (Matt. i. 19), virgin spouse of the virgin Mother and foster-father of his Lord, support and protector of the Holy Family in all their perils, but of whom the world knows so little that his passage hence is not recorded. The world martyred the Baptist and *knew not Joseph* (Exod. i. 8) ; but here we may imagine them placed on the right and left hand of their Lord, like Moses and Elias on Thabor.

Here then appear the first-fruits of the Redemption. Here the transition from the Old Testament to the New becomes manifest. Here commences the definite fusion of Israel with the Gentiles. Here all barriers fall, all distinctions are effaced ; there is only one heart, one body even—one single moral man : *you who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* (Eph. ii. 13) ; *the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.* (Eph. iv. 24.) And here shines forth the great providential design : *the dispensation of the fulness of times, to re-establish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth, in him.* (Eph. i. 10.)

II.—*Arise, let us go hence.* (John xiv. 31.) So had Christ said at the moment of leaving the Cenacle ; and

so we may imagine Him saying now. In an instant the vast host are at the sepulchre—transparent to the vision of souls. There, behind the massive entry-stone, in a cavity of the rock, beneath a mass of myrrh and aloes that covers and would suffocate it were it alive, and bound about with grave-clothes, the divine Body is extended, pale, cold and rigid. Before reuniting Himself to it, the divine Soul shows it to His following of souls. "God my Father would no longer have the victims of former times in sacrifice; to replace them He has fitted a body to me. (Heb. x. 5-8.) This is what man has done with it, what I have done with it myself. This is what it behoved Christ to suffer and so enter into His glory." (Luke xxiv. 26.) And the Just regard, contemplate and admire.

But the time has come. What hour precisely the world will never know: *early the first day of the week* is all we are told. (Mark xvi. 9.) Suddenly, to the astonishment of the Just, the divine Soul re-enters its Body. The corpse of a moment before rises, radiant with life and grace, the countenance resplendent as on Thabor, the whole bearing bespeaking majesty, joy and benignity. It is no phantom, for the Apostles will touch it presently—*and our hands have handled.* (1 John i. 1.) Nor is it new flesh substituted for the old, for it affirms its identity by retaining in its glory the traces of those wounds at least that do not disfigure it—*Put in thy finger hither and see my hands. And bring hither thy hand and put it into my side.* (John xx. 27.) But it is flesh spiritualized: *a spiritual body* (1 Cor. xv. 44); flesh agile and subtle as the spirit itself; traversing space and penetrating matter as light penetrates darkness. Behold then the second Adam: *the second man, from heaven, heavenly* (1 Cor. xv. 47.) already celestial in the very element He has deigned to borrow from earth. And this Body, which will always remain with Him as part of Himself, has the marvellous power of

vivifying souls and nourishing them : *the Last Adam (was made) into a quickening spirit.* (1 Cor. xv. 45, John vi. 55.) Jesus is resuscitated in glory ; the hypostatic union is reconstituted, henceforth indissoluble. What was separable is so no longer ; soul and body are renewed, joined together by the divinity which, for three days, sustained both separately and will not permit that man shall divide what it has once more joined together, and for always. *Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more. Death shall no more have dominion over him.* (Rom. vi. 9.)

But, as yet, earth has not seen or heard anything. It is time for her to take her part. Jesus leaves the sepulchre as once He left the virginal womb. His glorious Body passes through the rock without deigning to turn it aside. It was left for an angel to roll back the stone for the assistance of the holy women. (Matt. xxviii. 2.) Before even the dawn of *this day which the Lord hath made* (Ps. cxvii. 24), Jesus once more assumes possession of the space, air and light of the living, rejoicing as a giant to run His way. (Ps. xviii. 6.)

COLLOQUY.—I will felicitate Jesus my Lord on His joy and glory so dearly won. I will adore the King of the *Kingdom* and the *Standards*, returning victorious from the field of battle. I will unite my voice to that of the Angels of the Apocalypse, to say to Him : *The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honour and benediction.* (Apoc. v. 12.)

I will congratulate Mary. This moment—or not at all—is the time for her children to *rise up and call her blessed.* (Prov. xxxi. 28.) Nor will Jesus reprove me this time, if I say with the woman of old : *Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck.* (Luke xi. 27.) *Regina cœli lætare . . .*

And I will adore the celestial Father of lights, the

author of every perfect gift. (Jas. i. 17.) I will bless Him for loving the world, for loving me, to the extremity of giving His only Son (John iii. 16); for not having spared Him, but delivering Him up for us all. (Rom. viii. 32.) And I will bless Him yet again for having conducted Jesus to this fulness of honour and joy by the ways of trial and tribulation; and for having associated Mary with Him in the tears of yesterday and the triumph of to-day. *Pater Noster.*

XXXI

Emmaus

Though not of defined faith, it is of universal tradition that the first apparition of our divine Lord after His Resurrection was to His holy Mother. In her case, He had only to confirm the faith which had never hesitated or wavered. But with the Apostles, the holy women and His followers generally it was far otherwise. Some doubted and others were only half convinced at best. Consequently, the remainder of our Lord's sojourn upon earth was devoted to bringing a clear, firm, invincible conviction home to their minds. And, of the various apparitions, we will consider the one that occurred on the road to Emmaus.

Preludes.—The narrative as given by St. Luke. Two disciples set out from Jerusalem to go to Emmaus. On the way, they are overtaken by a stranger who enters into conversation with them. Taking up the thread of their discussion—the events of last week—the unknown expounds the scriptures foretelling them. Arrived at their destination, the disciples press their fellow-traveller—who seems inclined to continue his journey—to partake of a repast with them. He consents and, whilst they sit at table, takes bread and blesses it, as their Master had done at the Cenacle. As they recognize Him for the Master Himself He vanishes. The two rise and return to Jerusalem with all speed; not only to find that Christ has appeared to Simon Peter, but in time to assist at a second apparition themselves. (Luke xxiv.)

For a composition of place, I will follow the events as they occur. And, before joining the two disciples on the road, I will ask two graces. The first will be that I may rejoice with Jesus Christ at bringing consolation and hope to these two souls. The second: that at least some of that enthusiasm to which one of them confessed may be mine: *Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way?* (32.)

I.—It is the morning of the first day of the week. Two disciples of Jesus—one named Cleophas; the other unknown, but thought by some to be St. Luke himself—leave Jerusalem. Quite possibly their journey was undertaken in hope of dispelling the gloom of the last three days by change of scene. Their state of mind—a sort of settled despair—is evident from the fact that, though they have heard that the sepulchre has been found empty, they have not been led by curiosity to inquire further.

This suggests a very natural and practical application. Do not leave the society of the brethren, the community, without grave reason. "Common life: my greatest mortification," said St. John Berchmans: "paradise on earth," St. Aloysius found it. In truth, it may be both at the same time; but it is a pledge of the special presence of Jesus, *i.e.*, a privileged assistance: *Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Matt. xviii. 20.) When circumstances deprive me of this benefit, I ought to feel it a loss; when it remains to me, I should appreciate it for what it is: a privilege—even though it cost me some effort to sink myself and my concerns, my likes and dislikes, in furtherance of the general happiness and concord. From this point of view, Cleophas and his companion seem to have made a mistake in leaving the Apostolic College. Had the Master not met them on the road, they would probably have passed the night

at Emmaus and thus have missed an apparition in the evening—as St. Thomas in fact did. The goodness of Jesus supplied in both cases : but have I any right to count on the like happening to me ?

Nevertheless the two fugitives *talked together of all these things which had happened* (14)—the very things they sought to banish from their minds. Unprofitable discourse, seemingly ; for *they talked and reasoned with themselves.* (15.) But one thing is clear : they were so much attached to Jesus that, despite their desire for distraction, they were unable to talk of anything else. It needs no more than that to draw Him to them and, in fact, the Good Shepherd soon appears in search of His strayed sheep.

Now they hear some one coming up behind them : Jesus Himself. *But their eyes were held, that they should not know him.* (16.) He overtakes, joins them and enters into conversation.

What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad ? Cleophas replies, somewhat testily : *Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days ? What things ?* asks the stranger. (Who should know these *things* better than He—the hero and victim of them all ? But He wishes to make them speak, to draw from them the avowal of their troubles.) Thereupon the couple take up their tale : *Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in word and work before God and all the people.* Naïve eulogy ! but evidently sincere, and it must delight the Master, as a sign of the love these poor men bear Him. *And* (they continue) *how our chief priests and princes delivered him to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we hoped that it was he who should have redeemed Israel.* (Luke xxiv. 17-21.)

We hoped ! Evidently hope is dead within them. And yet, in the same breath, they adduce excellent

reasons for hoping still. "Certain women of our company went to the sepulchre before daylight, and profess to have seen angels there, who said that Jesus is alive. Some of our people went and verified the story of the women, inasmuch as they did not find the body." (22-24.) And, instead of gleaning encouragement from this, the narrators avow themselves to have been *affrighted.*

Here appears the feebleness of man in presence of the supernatural. These two disciples cannot be ignorant of the fact that Jesus had often predicted His Resurrection—or why their insistence on *to-day being the third day since these things were done* (21.)? But all is overshadowed by the visible fact of His death—another weakness of man: always dominated by what is present and sensible. They are human, these disciples, very human, and not disposed to believe further than they can see and understand.

II.—The unknown, having drawn their story from the two wayfarers, now proceeds to instruct them. He commences with a gentle scolding—excellent tonic on occasions for the pusillanimous! *O foolish and slow of heart to believe.* (25.) Here He puts an unerring finger on the root of all unbelief: slowness of heart. We talk of "pride of intellect," but the expression is not strictly accurate. By itself, the intellect is incapable of vice or virtue; the will is the determining force. We see it on every side. The indifferent, who neither know nor care to know; the material, *choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life* (Luke viii. 14); the timorous, who dreads the obligations to which his investigations may lead—did he fear the Lord, he would *tremble at nothing* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 16); the arrogant, who refuses submission to all spiritual authority—all these are instances of either feebleness or perversity of will: *slowness of heart,* in fact.

Now, about myself. God has given me the gift of faith; but do I value, and therefore cultivate it assiduously—endeavour to be the *just man living by faith.* (Heb. x. 38.) Negatively: do I accept everything that happens in the spirit of faith: positively, do I do everything I do under its influence? Time and again during the day I could convince myself of my need of an increase of faith, did I only advert to it; and the fact of my not adverting to it should convince me of it still more. And whence does that arise? Why are merely natural ideas so active and powerful with me, and those of faith so slow and feeble? Because of my entanglement in external things, over-concern about trifles perhaps; but, at bottom and before all, my too involuntary immortification. When I commenced the Exercises, I was warned to dispose myself, to clear my soul of all inordinate affections; after which only should I be in a fit state to seek and find the will of God by which to regulate my life. That was to give me to understand that, in every degree of the practical supernatural—whether in matters of perfection or those of general obligation—the light of faith is eclipsed, lessened or retarded solely by the resistance of the will. And if I will only recognize my own lack of faith, confess that it arises from my deplorable SELF-LOVE, and obtain the grace of courage to overcome it; that will be the best result of my retreat.

We return to the two travellers on the road to Emmaus. The Master continues: *O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory?* (26.) Here is the true idea of the true Jesus: *to suffer these things.* Let me briefly remind myself of what this implies. The glory that was necessarily His, which belonged to Him in right of the hypostatic union, it has pleased Him in some manner to cast aside, *i.e.*, abdicate its privileges

spontaneously ; and then to re-enter it violently and in a bloody manner. It was necessary—as He Himself said : *oportuit* (it behoved). And why ? Not assuredly to save the honour of the prophecies, since they only uttered, registered and promulgated the designs from on high in advance. Nor was it from essential, antecedent necessity, imposed (so to speak) on the divine Wisdom by the force of things ; nor even by the exigencies of the Redemption freely decreed. It was necessary because, His Father having freely proposed it, His human will freely submitted to it, and thence it became a law to itself. And why ?—for whom this proposition of the celestial Father ? Why ?—for whom this acceptance to which the Son bound Himself ? I have seen it in the *Kingdom of Christ* and the *Two Standards*, I have confessed it at the Crib : *And all these things for me.* I believe it, I own my enormous debt, and avow myself obliged by love, gratitude, justice, professional engagement, to endeavour to enter into the same glory that is His and which He has rendered mine, if I only will, by shedding His Blood for me—and, as far as is permitted to me, by the same means. An obligation do I call it ? To follow Him closely in suffering in order to follow Him in glory : that should rather be esteemed an honour and a joy. May I accept it thus henceforth ! *O Lord God . . . keep for ever this will of (my) heart : and let this mind remain always for the worship of thee.* (1 Paral. xxix. 18.)

The Gospel shows yet a third lesson given to our two wayfarers. *Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things that were concerning him* (27)—gave them in effect an abridged course of Holy Scripture. They were richer than we are, in the sense that they had it from the lips of the Master Himself. We are richer than they, inasmuch as we have the Old and New Testaments ever open before us ; if we will but avail ourselves of them to read and

ponder in our hearts, as did our Lady. (Luke ii. 19.) I am, by the duty of my state, the scribe, the doctor of the kingdom of God who, like the father of the family, *bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old.* (Matt. xiii. 52.) I ought then to study the Sacred Scriptures all my life, either to gather in a rich harvest or glean, straw by straw, all that concerns Jesus Christ and all that will help me to know Him better. All around me, I see men interest themselves in, and devote themselves to some branch of profane science—sometimes even to knowledge not worth the having. And should not I, apostle, minister, servant of Christ, study without relaxation the *holy scriptures, which can instruct me to salvation . . . profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice?* (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) Shall I pretend to have exhausted them? Shall they interest me less than the current magazine and the daily newspaper? No: the words that are *spirit and life* (John vi. 64) are necessary for the stability and vigour of my own personal faith, and still more so for the efficient discharge of my apostolic functions. And what do I owe to the faithful, if not the word that treats of all things that Jesus did and taught (Acts i. 1), *the ingrafted word, which is able to save* (*their*) *souls*? (Jas. i. 21.)

The two travellers were talking about Jesus even before He joined them—"engaging in spiritual conversation" in fact. There was a time—years ago perhaps, when I was young in religion—when such conversation interested me. And now . . . ? A director of a seminary once said, concerning the priests (!) of the diocese: "They are delighted to hear Jesus Christ spoken about. They would willingly talk of Him among themselves, but they dare not." They dare not! ! !

Here we notice the sequence of events. The two disciples were conversing about their Master; He

appeared to them and explained the scriptures concerning Himself; their hearts burned within them while He spoke (Luke xxiv. 32); and that evening *He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.* (45.) Commencing by being interested, they continued by understanding, ended by becoming enthusiastic, and set out to convert the world. And I . . . ?

To continue. Emmaus is reached. The unknown makes as if to continue His journey: they constrain Him to join them in their repast. (29.) *And it came to pass, whilst he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them.* (30.) Was this a consecration and Holy Communion? A pious and beautiful idea; but not very probable, according to Fr. Knabenbauer, S.J. But whether or no, it achieved its purpose. *And their eyes were opened and they knew him. And he vanished out of their sight.* (31.)

Rising up the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem to rejoin the Apostolic College. There, they found that the Lord had appeared to Simon Peter. And while they were narrating their own experiences, *Jesus stood in the midst of them.* (36.) Thus the two wayfarers were honoured with two apparitions the same day. Even supposing they left the apostolic community in quest of some distraction which might relieve their overwrought feelings—and what more human?—their hearts and minds were filled with thoughts of the Master they feared they had lost. Their faithfulness had its reward. Once more: And I?

Colloquy.—Lord Jesus: you have given me the gift of faith; you have surrounded me with every possible help and safeguard. And yet I can always weaken, endanger, lose it even. For I carry within me that heart so slow to believe with which you reproached your disciples; that evil heart and proportionately

incredulous of which Holy Scripture speaks elsewhere : *an evil heart of unbelief* (Heb. iii. 12) ; those inordinate affections ; that poor SELF of concupiscences—permanent obstacle to the plenitude of faith, menace to its perseverance even. Give me then the courage to conquer it. Grant that henceforth I may live the life of faith in such wise that, at its close, I may be able to say : *I have finished my course : I have kept the faith.* (2 Tim. iv. 7.)

You have caused me to be born in an age when faith seems fast vanishing from the earth. Yet : priest, religious, you have deigned to associate me with yourself, to guard it, revive it, awaken it. Honour inestimable, but charge overwhelming if you be not here to sustain me ! May I be enabled then to spend myself without reserve, in order to bring the light of faith to those who *sit in darkness*, and guide those who have it *into the way of peace.* (Luke i. 79.)

XXXII

Heaven

It must always be difficult to meditate on heaven. St. Paul almost defies us to do it: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard: neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) And yet we are bound to hope for and desire it. Consequently we must be capable of forming some conception of heaven, however inadequate, whereon to found our hope and desire; for God does not demand the impossible. We commence therefore by way of First Prelude, by recalling the facts of faith.

God, says St. Paul, *inhabiteth light inaccessible: whom no man hath seen, nor can see.* (1 Tim. vi. 16.) The attainment of that light—the beatific vision of God, gratuitously destined for man and lost by him—has been regained for the human race by Jesus Christ. And He, in willing that: *where I am, you (the Apostles) also may be,* wills it also for me. He left this earth to prepare a place for me. (John xiv. 3.)

For Second Prelude, I will ask that I may so love my divine Lord as to rejoice in His triumph over hell and death; and that this love may inspire me with renewed hope for myself—the hope of living with Him in heaven for ever.

For our meditation therefore, we will take the words of St. Augustine: *There we shall be emptied and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. This shall be in the end without end.* (*de Civ. Dei.*)

I.—In heaven we shall be " emptied," *i.e.*, have nothing more to wish for, be exempt from all troubles of heart and the " necessities " from which the Psalmist prayed to be delivered. (Ps. xxiv. 17.) Heaven will be the realization of the ideals of the Lord's Prayer, and the prayer itself transformed into a hymn of gratitude for accomplished facts. Shall we pray to our Father : *who art in heaven* ? But we shall be there with Him. And why ask Him for anything when we possess all in possessing Him ? There His name will be perfectly hallowed and glorified, His kingdom consummated, His will accomplished as alone it ought to be : from love of Him.

Shall we ask for *our daily bread* ? For our resuscitated bodies, no more material bread required, no lower needs : life permanent and indefectible. For the soul, no more daily bread, which was grace : now we are in glory—not having need of even the celestial Bread, which was the Holy Eucharist. In this eternal to-day, Jesus lives in us, perfectly, constantly, with no need of renewal.

Shall we say : *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us* ? As regards the past, the record is closed : as regards the future, useless request ; in heaven no more sin, no possibility of offending God. And, if I had not forgiven my erring brother *from my heart*, I should not be here. (Matt. xviii. 35.) In heaven, no more conflicting interests and consequent rivalries. Much more than the primitive Christian community is it the country where all have *but one heart and one soul.* (Acts iv. 32.)

And to what purpose avert temptation by prayer ? No more temptation to fear, no assaults from outside, no more world or " prince of this world." Above all : no more of the proud and sensual SELF, with his concupiscence and inordinate affections. Life on earth below was wont to be a painful effort of watchfulness,

distrust of, and combat against myself. That is ended : *the former things are passed away* (Apoc. xxi. 4) ; and I can ask with confidence what I used to ask with at least some reservation : *Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ?* (Rom. viii. 35.)

All the past done with : *from henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.* (Apoc. xiv. 13.) My time of trial having come to an end, will nothing remain to me of what was my life ? Yes and No. Nothing of that which troubles or afflicts ; all that can add to my eternal peace and joy.

My terrestrial goods of every sort : do I regret them ? Impossible ; for the eternal Good I now possess eclipses all. Nothing more in my soul now than the joy of having sacrificed them.

My earthly affections ? Inordinate : I shall rejoice at having overcome them. Legitimate : they will either be gratified by the salvation of souls dear to me, or absorbed in the love of God present. Should they—alas !—be lost, it will be powerless to diminish my peace. Whoso sees God and possesses Him cannot suffer even from that.

And my sins ? What do St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalene think of theirs ? If they do not go so far as to say : *O happy faults*, they at least delight in their penitence, and adore *the mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed.* (Thren. iii. 22.) So will it be with me.

And my labours, my sufferings, my sacrifices ? Eight times did our Lord promise beatitude to effort—the effort of detachment : of living for heaven rather than for earth, of hunger and thirst for justice only ; the sacrifice of sense to purity, self-love to peace ; forgiveness, cheerful submission to persecution for justice' sake. To-day, in heaven, all need for effort has passed ; and I can say with St. Paul that the sufferings of my life on earth were not worthy to be compared with the glory that is now mine. (Rom. viii. 18.) Yes : the

effort has passed away, but the beatitude remains: *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure.* (Ps. xxxv. 9.) This shall be in the end without end.

II.—*There we shall see.* It would be a grave error to imagine the peace of heaven as a state of inertia and somnolence. While there will be no trouble or agitation of mind, there will be the fullest scope for the exercise of our natural powers; and, first of all, of our power to see, to know.

To begin with created objects. We shall see the Holy City, the new Jerusalem—henceforth our eternal abode. St. John saw it, and described it in terms suitable to our human limitations. (Apoc. xxi.) But, have we not reason to believe it to be infinitely more wonderful and beautiful than even his description of it?

And the world—the visible creation amid which I lived? St. Peter foretold its passing away *with great violence.* (2 Pet. iii. 10.) But nothing forbids us to see in this the old creation purified and renewed: *a new heaven and a new earth* in fact. (Apoc. xxi. 1.) God has no pleasure in destruction: *He created all things that they might be.* (Wisd. i. 14.) And since, *by what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented* (Wisd. xi. 17); why should he not be recompensed by all that has served him for his victory? But, though all disappear, the memory will remain, and with it an enlightened understanding to teach us *how* and *why* all the works of the Lord *praise and exalt him above all for ever.* (Dan. iii. 57.)

Then the secret history of the world will be plain—disengaged from all errors and illusions. For myself, I shall see why God led me through paths that seemed so hard; how every misfortune (as I called it) was sent for my good, if I would only accept it so; perhaps how

God drew me to Him in spite of myself; how He desired *to re-establish all things in Christ*, in myself and others. (Eph. i. 10.) And the thought of what heaven promises should serve to wean me from the concupiscence of the eyes—of body and soul. Present beauties, instead of fascinating and hindering me, should appeal to *the eyes of* (*my*) *heart enlightened* (Eph. i. 18), and raise me to the contemplation of the future.

Then I shall behold the *great cloud of witnesses* who await me. (Heb. xii. 1.) First of all, the saints. I shall henceforth be among them as one of them. Here, the company of my friends is sometimes a burden; but, even if delightful, is no more than a shadow of that heavenly society in which we shall love God in all men and all men in Him.

My Guardian Angel: I shall be able to thank him for his care of me in life, as did the Tobias father and son when the angel revealed his identity. (Tobit. xii. 15.)

And the Blessed Virgin! At sight of her, even on earth, the Archangel Gabriel prostrated himself. He saw her as the humble village maiden: I shall see her as the glorious Queen of all the heavenly citizens! And I shall bless her for that, by her, Christ my Redeemer was given unto the world—unto me.

The Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ. As I left the earth, the Church prayed: *May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and cheerful countenance.* (*Ord. com. anim.*) Perhaps He has even given me an embrace of welcome on the threshold: in any case, I can look upon Him eternally. The saints desired *to be dissolved and be with Christ.* (Phil. i. 23.) They are there now, and I shall be with them if I, the disciple of the *Kingdom* and the *Standards*, only have the courage to follow Him in suffering here below: *if we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him.* (Rom. viii. 17.)

But all I have hitherto contemplated is as nothing;

for there remains the beatific vision, the sight of God, whom *we shall see as he is.* (1 John iii. 2.) Here, *we see through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face.* (1 Cor. xiii. 12.)

And how? How shall the creature be enabled to look upon the Creator? By *the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* (Phil. iii. 21.) To render me capable of this vision, God will elevate my faculties to such an extent as to divinize them. Here below, the mere contemplation of the true, the beautiful and the good reacts upon the beholder, elevates the soul and renders it better. What then will not the contemplation of the Truth, the All-Beautiful, the absolute Goodness, effect in ourselves? *But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as if by the Spirit of the Lord.* (2 Cor. iii. 18.) How will it be with us, when we see this glory immediately and intuitively? *We know* (*says St. John*) *that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is.* (1 John iii. 2.) Hence it is clear that, in order to see God, I must be made like unto Him, and this by a gratuitous gift proceeding from His almighty power.

A last consideration. The immediate, adequate and eternal vision God has of Himself constitutes His own beatitude. It would fully suffice Him though He had never produced anything outside Himself: though angels, human race, Incarnation—any object external to His own love, in short—had never been. And He promises it to me! That is the fortune to which I am heir: *heir indeed of God and joint heir with Christ.* (Rom. viii. 17.)

Nevertheless, I still remain powerless to imagine the happiness of heaven: *neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Shall I then become cold and despair in consequence? On the contrary. God

has revealed so much, and given me faith to conceive still more, together with the assurance that all falls short of the reality, in order to excite my expectations and stimulate my exertions to their utmost. And it is only hereafter that I shall know completely what God has prepared for me, and then only if I shall have had the courage to show my love for Him by following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, by the complete renunciation here on earth of the sensual and proud SELF, and by embracing what He embraced: the mortification and humiliation of the Cross.

III.—*We shall love and praise.* To love God as far as that is a necessary condition of my beatitude; to love God with a perfect love is the necessary complement of that beatitude itself. We consider therefore:—

The human heart was made to love: purely, peacefully, without measure. That is the ideal, but it is unrealizable on earth. And the obstacles are: Disenchantment; Refusal of reciprocal love, which turns it to bitterness; Inconstancy. Besides which, to love a mortal creature at once unmeasuredly and purely is impossible—as my conscience tells me very plainly.

Then I must leave earth and ascend to heaven in search of my ideal. There only shall I meet with no disenchantment. Disappointment at finding God less lovable and beautiful than I had imagined! Impossible! Do I fear loving God without return? But I only love God because He first loved me (1 John iv. 10); and if He had not loved me I should not be in existence, far less in heaven. Shall I fear inconstancy? If inconstancy there be, it will be on my part, not on His: *Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.* (Jer. xxxi. 3.) And this love, which has forestalled my own from all eternity, which not only equals but infinitely surpasses it; this love which is the very Goodness of God, will

only cease when He ceases to be good, *i.e.*, when He ceases to be.

I am here to praise God : it was the first word of the Exercises. In heaven, I shall praise God : that is the last word of St. Augustine. How should I not praise Him ? My soul is free from all evil and fear ; my intellect in contact with the eternal Wisdom ; my heart in possession of the sole object that can satisfy it. I shall praise God, the Sacred Humanity of His Son, the Blessed Virgin, the angels, the saints. And remembering my own nothingness, and that I owe everything to God, I shall even praise myself, *because he that is mighty hath done great things to me.* (Luke i. 49.) He hath forgiven all my iniquities, redeemed my life from destruction and satisfied my desire with good things. (Ps. cii. 3-5.) And this shall be in the end without end.

Colloquy.—As a conclusion to this very imperfect attempt to conceive what God has prepared for those who love Him, I will make an act of Faith and Hope :—

My God, on your word, revealed by Jesus Christ ; in virtue of his Blood, which is the price of my celestial inheritance ; and on the pledge given me by your Holy Spirit, that I was *signed with the holy Spirit of promise* (Eph. i. 13) ; I believe myself called to the eternal, beatific vision of your divine Essence. May thy grace deign to strengthen this faith still more ! May I conserve and nourish it by meditation ! May I constantly enter into the most intimate communion with that blessed world above, in which you are seen and perfectly loved. *I do believe, Lord. Help my unbelief.* (Mark ix. 23.)

As I believe in your heaven, so do I hope for it for myself. Stimulate then my all-too-feeble hope, by enkindling my desire of enjoying the society of the Blessed, and the eternal union with yourself. Make of that desire a flame which shall consume all my earthly

affections. Better still: give me courage to wean myself from them, trample them under foot; and thus be able to say, with sincerity: *What have I in heaven? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth?* (Ps. lxxii. 25.)

Further: Grant me the wisdom to understand that nothing earthly—my own labours, my priestly state, my religious profession—can make my salvation certain; and therefore it behoves me not to permit my hope to degenerate into presumption. May I ever *work out my salvation with fear and trembling.* (Phil. ii. 12.)

And, since hope is vain and desire illusory without a sincere disposition to action, effort, an energetic pursuit of the good hoped for: I here offer myself without reserve to the indispensable labour. Confirm and maintain me in my present desire to serve Thee faithfully throughout my life: *keep for ever this will of (my) heart.* (1 Paral. xxix. 18.)

XXXIII

Contemplation for obtaining Love

The object of this meditation is the pure love of God. This, like every good gift, comes only from God Himself (Jas. i. 17), from whom I must obtain it by prayer, by my life-long efforts to deserve it and, at the present moment, by meditation on the motives.

This contemplation is the completion of the Exercises. In the Foundation I considered my true relation to God and the duty arising from that relation. I then reflected on how far I had failed in my duty, and resolved to amend. Next, I called to mind the obstacles in the way of amendment—chiefly my proud and sensual Self. Step by step I have followed the life of my Master on earth, and seen what He has done, not only to redeem me but to show me by example that the perfect life is not impossible and stimulate my courage. *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?* (Ps. cxv. 12.) Love, arising from gratitude.

But there is a higher and purer form of love than gratitude for past favours or hope of future ones: the love of friendship. In the first instance, this love tends to give what it has—goods, and so on. Progressing, it gives something of itself—its presence and complete confidence. And it is completed by the entire gift of self—by sacrifice, of which death is the ideal: *greater love than this no man hath.* (John xv. 13.) When the habit of communication of this mutual gift exists between two persons, then there is reciprocal love, *i.e.*, a true relation of friendship. And that is the

relation which God deigns to desire between Himself and me.

First Prelude.—I behold heaven open above my head. I see God. What is He doing? Loving me. Also the angels and saints. They love God perfectly; and also love me, since they deign to intercede for me. What do they ask? That I may love God as they love Him. It is the region of perfect love.

Second Prelude.—I will ask for an intimate knowledge —such as I asked for in regard to my sins—of God's goodness to me, in order that I may be induced to love Him from gratitude. And then I will ask that—as far as is possible for a creature—I may have an intimate knowledge of God Himself, to the end that I may love Him for Himself; and serve Him in all things, by all things, and in spite of all things. So may I find in Him my God and my all.

I.—Briefly I review God's benefits: creation, supernatural destiny, Redemption, the Catholic Church and all it implies. Indivisible in themselves, they were yet all for me—like the sunlight—just as though I were the only person in existence. Not only for me as an item in creation, but for me personally. In every benefit God conferred, He saw me, aimed at me, designed His great acts of love for me.

I recall the benefits more especially personal to myself. These comprise my history: my Christian birth, Catholic education, conversion perhaps, pardons, religious vocation, priesthood possibly. Were these for all the world? Shall I not own myself sufficiently privileged? One thing stands out in full relief: God loves me.

Not only does God love me, but He proves it by communicating of His own and of Himself to me.

Let us make man to our image and likeness, said He, in the beginning. (Gen. i. 26.) In my understanding I find a glimmering of the divine intelligence; in my will a faint spark of the divine power, not only to will but to love.

In giving Jesus Christ to me, He begins to give me of His own, of Himself—is not Jesus Christ God? On Calvary He re-establishes me in the supernatural order—that supreme benefit, the capacity for which can belong to Him only by nature. Thus does He stretch the limits of communication to their utmost here below.

Jesus Christ is the conclusive proof of God's love for me: *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.* (John iii. 16.) He came to bring God's greatest gift to man—eternal life: *I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.* (John x. 10.) *He that hath the Son hath life.* (1 John v. 12.) What greater proof could God have given of His love for man—for me?

Whoso loves desires to be loved in return. And God, loving me, desires that I should love Him—it is His first Commandment. This, because it is the right order: how should the All-Lovable not be loved? Again, not for His own good but for mine: all my happiness consists in loving Him.

But can I love God and, if so, how? I can; for God does not demand impossibilities. And how: shall I offer Him what I have? But *thou art my God, for thou hast no need of my goods.* (Ps. xv. 2.) What I am then—my talents, devotion, services? But again: *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Then, as I am nothing and have nothing in my own right, how can there be reciprocal gifts or a love of friendship?

God has provided for this, and in two ways. First: being able to exact all, He has deigned to limit His

demands of obligation to the Commandments. Beyond them He left me free to embrace the Counsels or not. I did so and, thenceforth, my vows and rules became of obligation. A sorry present this, of myself, but it was spontaneous. And beyond this again, I am free to go further: to become only a tolerable religious or make myself a saint. In neither of these two cases does God command; He simply invites: *If thou wilt be perfect . . . come.* (Matt. xix. 21.) And is not this to constitute in me the power to give voluntarily, to show myself generous towards my Creator and Lord?

Secondly: by the dominating intention of love. Here God gives me the secret of transforming obligation into offering. Although intention cannot change the nature of things—*e.g.*, render good an act bad in itself—it can ennoble and transfigure. The intention of love can ennoble an indifferent action; it can also transfigure an action due under some other title, *e.g.*, I can refrain from sin, not merely because it is forbidden, but because I love God and wish to please Him.

Then, since I can really make an exchange of goods with God and so enter upon a love of friendship, what shall I offer Him? First, the powers of my soul. As far as justice is concerned, I ought not to use them otherwise than in God's interest; but it is from love and gratitude that I wish to do this. Memory and intellect were only given me to know God. I wish them to be entirely occupied with Him; studying nothing and, in the last resort, interesting myself in nothing but what concerns Him. As to my will, I hereby renounce all that gratifies my proud and sensual SELF. And secondly: if so be that my will detach itself from God in order to seek creatures; then may it be countered and thwarted, and so be compelled to give by force what it has not the courage to give from love.

II.—God is all-loving. He, the universal Benefactor,

is present and working in all His benefits. *In him we live and move and are.* (Acts xvii. 28.) To find Him, I have no need to ascend to heaven, nor even enter His churches. My vision, my reason convince me of this. Persons and things have each their reality and separate existence which they hold from God, but which are not God. And, nevertheless, He is in each one of them. He conserves each at every instant by a positive and continuous act, without which it would vanish into the nothingness from which it came. Were I a stranger to the creation that surrounds me, God's presence within me would still be evident, preserving the vegetative and sentient life I hold in common with His lower creatures and superadding at every second that intellectual life by which I dominate them and resemble Him. There —without speaking of the transitory eucharistic presence—it only depends upon myself to possess Him permanently by retaining sanctifying grace. God around me, God within me, God everywhere.

And what does that signify, if not that He loves me ? It was not sufficient for the great Benefactor to send His gifts ; He comes in person and commences to give Himself. That is to say : He loves me—loves me in those creatures incapable of loving, since He created them for my service ; loves me in those He permits to hate or harm me, since He would not so permit them unless for the greater good of my soul. Present within me, He loves me when I offend or forget Him. I carry His divine presence and His love within me, even at the moment when I am so misguided as to refuse Him my own.

What shall I give Him in return ? Presence for presence : recognition, frequent recollection—perpetual if I could. He that loves bestows his presence ; and he that bestows his presence proves that he loves. God does it for me ; let me do it for Him. The presence of God is always an actual truth, but, did I only know

how to appreciate it, it would be my support, my refuge, my peace and happiness as well. And why? Because it would unceasingly remind me of His love, and unceasingly provoke my own. And yet, in my weakness and worldliness, I do not regard the habitual remembrance of God as the honour it actually is, but as a duty almost too high, and sometimes as a burden almost too heavy. *If (only) thou didst know the gift of God.* (John iv. 10.)

God is not only present, but actively working in all His benefits. It is only by His incessant work that I am conserved at every moment. My material actions —outside the moral disorder I put into them, which belongs only to me—are His, as the First Cause of them all: I am merely the secondary cause and can do nothing without the sovereign concurrence of God.

And what shall be said of that moral action by which He works beneficently and gently in every living soul here below? Lights, inspirations, mute appeals, graces offered, graces poured out even on those who ignore and contemn them. Even in heaven God still cultivates the elect soul, not to urge it on to its goal—it has already arrived there—but to conserve it in being and, with that being, bestowing the entirely supernatural and divine power of seeing Himself face to face as He is. Truly did our Lord say: *My Father worketh until now.* (John v. 17.)

And for whom the benefit of this prodigious and peaceful labour? Not for God Himself. Though He exacts and procures His external glory, this is but because it is the right order, not because He needs it for His own happiness. He works for man, for me, because He loves me and wishes me to be as happy as Himself. For me His benefits in the natural order—light, air, food, etc.; for me those of the supernatural —Church, sacraments, actual grace —(His direct effort

on my soul) : for me those situations and happenings that seem to come by chance—all nothing but the continuous breath of that divine love urging me forward to my eternal happiness. On earth, Jesus Christ would take the part of a servant among His own : *I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth.* (Luke xxii. 27.) And does His heavenly Father take any other ? And to serve me with all His wisdom, all His power, all His Heart, and with no obligation to do so : what is that but to love ?

What then shall I do in return ? First of all, I will believe in His work, His services and His love. Seeing beyond outward appearances, I will recognize His hand in all that happens to and, more particularly, against me. In health or in sickness, joyful or sorrowful, peaceful or persecuted, I will behold God working out His glory in the manner that seems good to Him. But it is all too little to believe : we must work. God serves me in everything, I also will serve Him in everything. God loves me : I will love Him in return, and with all my mind, all my soul and all my strength—spare myself in nothing ; but love Him in everything : persons, things, all that happens to me.

And how forget that I have not only to love Him, but also induce others to do the same—it is my second professional end ? I am a labourer of the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 8), *coadjutor* of God Himself (1 Cor. iii. 9) ; and it is my duty to help souls by leading them to love and serve Him. And more than duty, it is an honour and privilege. For, while God—who is perfectly sufficient for Himself—*commands* all men to love Him, He deigns to *invite* me to light the fire of love in a world that is fast forgetting all about Him.

III.—And now, without losing sight of the motives, already noble and holy, I would, by the help of God's grace, rise to the supreme motive : to love God for

Himself, independently of my own hopes and His benefits.

God is all-lovable in Himself. Everything should lead me to Him. I behold the exceeding beauty of His external creation : what is it there for except to induce me to reflect on the infinite wisdom of Him who designed it ? *All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God : and who by these good things that are seen could not understand him that is . . . let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they.* (Wisd. xiii. 1, 3.) I am conscious of the beauties of His internal creation in the talents, virtues and sanctity of many around me : what are they but a feeble reflection of the eternal Wisdom and Holiness ? I can even imagine those of the Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Humanity itself. And yet all are but as a ray of light compared to the sun. If then, the ray delights me, what shall I conceive of the sun itself ? If I love the beautiful, how much more ought I to love the Perfection of all beauty—not in the abstract, but as the sovereign realization of all possible beauty on earth or in heaven. A devoted friend rejoices in the prosperity of one to whom he is attached, without a thought of personal advantage ; a good son feels proud and happy in the merits of his father. And I, in the first instance, will endeavour to say, from my heart : *We give thee thanks for thy great glory,* and thence rise to the most disinterested love of which poor human nature is capable. And I will try to arrive at it by translating it into practice in advance, thus :—

" If every created being, if my own be nothing but a faint reflection of yours, O infinite Being, I no longer desire to see or love any person or thing—above all, myself—but because of you. If I have the signal honour of being your image ; if I have also the power of rendering it, by my own voluntary efforts, a little less distant and faithless ; if your Son holds up your

own perfection as my ideal: *Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. v. 48): I wish to efface in myself all traces of the old man who is not according to you. Jesus Christ, who only forms one with you, presents to me the human form of that divine perfection to which He invites me on your behalf. Therefore, I only desire to live in order to reform and transform myself on that model. And I desire it above all, because I love Him, because I love you, and in the hope that this bond between us may conduce to resemblance. So may I increase in every way, by Him, with Him, in Him, in the accomplishment of the practical and supereminent truth, which is to love you; thus do I desire to serve you in everything, less from hope and gratitude than from love."

Colloquy.—Holy Church, in her prayers, addresses Almighty God as "infinitely good": that is to postulate, at the very least, the most complete gratitude. Again, she confesses Him to be infinitely lovable: a sufficient motive for purest love. "O my God, to cover my unworthiness, to help my own powerlessness, I unite myself with all you love on earth, all you love in heaven—your angels, your saints, the immaculate heart of Mary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ and, in this intimate union, I offer you my Act of Charity."

CONSIDERATIONS

(These form no part of the original work)

(1) Our Vocation

Every one on earth was created and placed there for one purpose only: in order to prove whether or no they will endeavour to become, as far as is possible for a creature, worthy of eternal life. By far the greater number are called upon to do this in the ordinary way—by leading good lives as parents, merchants, administrators, and so on. This must be so, or the world could not go on as Almighty God intended it should. But, while He *commands* all men to save their own souls, He deigns to *invite* a comparative few to help them to do so—either in the secular priesthood or in the religious state—and this invitation is called a vocation.

Vocation, therefore, is an invitation to the direct service of God. Holy Scripture tells us of a very limited number of privileged souls who were so called from the day of their birth. Such were: the Prophet Samuel (1 Kings i.), Jeremias (Jer. i.), John the Baptist (Luke i.). Since then, there seems no room for doubt that others, too, have been equally predestined for the apostolic life they led.

Others, again, were called later in life: Eliseus (1 Kings xix.); the Apostles—St. Peter taken from his nets (Matt. iv.), St. Matthew from a custom-house (Matt. ix.) and, later on, St. Paul from the direction of an antichristian persecution. (Acts ix.) In the Middle

Ages there was St. Ignatius, courtier and soldier; St. Alphonsus Liguori, a lawyer, and many others. And in these latter days, however unworthy we may have been of such a grace, the summons has come to you and me.

God left us free to accept His call or not. It does not follow that, had we not done so, we should have lost our souls; but it would have been the rejection of a great grace and our salvation might have been more difficult in consequence. Some would not accept the invitation of our Lord Himself, *e.g.*, the young man *who went away sad: for he had great possessions.* (Matt. xix. 22.) Others accepted but fell away afterwards: *After this, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.* (John vi. 67.) Some have done the same in our own day, hence the ex-priest and the escaped nun. Apart from the question of their broken promises, did either of these two last do well, even for themselves? Well, are they leading a better life?

Having accepted the summons to religious life, my first task must be my own sanctification by the observance of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. It is a simple matter to take vows; it is comparatively easy to keep them outwardly—indeed very little opportunity is afforded me of doing otherwise. But, as the ultimate judge of my observance is God Himself, who *knoweth the secrets of the heart* (Ps. xliii. 22), it should be *with a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men.* (Eph. vi. 7.) To what purpose is it to pose as a poor man, if my heart is still among the things I left behind me? The kingdom of heaven is not promised to the materially poor, still less to the discontented poor, but to the *poor in spirit.* (Matt. v. 3.) Again, God wants my heart—my whole heart: *My son, give me thy heart.* (Prov. xxiii. 26.) When St. Joseph and our Lady

found no room in the inn at Bethlehem (Luke ii. 7), they did not inquire whether there was not a crib which the divine Child might share with another, but sought an unoccupied one elsewhere. So it is with me: if Christ is to make His abode with me (John xiv. 23) my heart must be free: *for he is a holy God, and mighty and jealous.* (Josue xxiv. 19.) And though I *do* all things that are commanded me, surely I am nothing but an unprofitable servant if my outward compliance is accompanied by inward criticism and perhaps rebellion. All of which may be summed up in one word: SELF-DENIAL—but the highest form of self-denial. St. Gregory, commenting on Christ's words: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself* (Matt. xvi. 24), remarks: "It may not cost a man very much to relinquish his goods (and St. Jerome reminds us elsewhere that even heathen philosophers and others have done it), but it costs him very dearly to relinquish himself. A small matter to deny himself in what he has, a very great one to deny himself in what he is." (*Hom.* 32.)

So we have to sanctify ourselves to the utmost, and our Institute or Order provides us with the means of doing so. In addition to prayer and the sacraments, which are means common to all Christians, we have a further incentive in our Rules. Those Rules are approved by Holy Church, as pointing out the path to high sanctity; and by their scrupulous observance men and women have in fact attained to it. They were framed, in the first instance, that the good order and religious observance of the community might be safeguarded; but they also serve the very useful purpose of helping the individual on the way to sanctity by calling attention to certain matters in which poor human nature is, for the most part, liable to fail. And, if any one can read his Rules and say with truth that nothing

in them affects him, then he is either a saint already or an exceptional individual whose peculiar failings have hitherto eluded general observation. Here again, outward compliance will do little more than gain for us the reputation of being " very good community men " : *Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.* (Matt. vi. 2.) There is little advantage in my keeping silence, restraining my senses, limiting my intercourse with the world outside, and so on, if I do not avail myself of the opportunity thus afforded me to practise the virtue implied : recollection. Again : if my fraternal charity is to be anything more than hypocrisy, it must be sincere—I cannot love my brother " officially, according to the Rules," and hate him in private life. And so, when I examine my conscience and pray about my observance of my Rules—and I ought to do it—I am in fact praying that I may successfully advance towards the accomplishment of my first professional object : my own sanctification.

Difficult ! Of course it is difficult ; where would be the merit if it were not ? Is not my ideal that held up for me by Jesus Christ Himself : *Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. v. 48)—an ideal which death found the saints themselves endeavouring to live up to ? Can we suppose the devil, who found his way into the Garden of Eden, will not try to effect entry into a religious house ? And, as if these were not difficulties sufficient, we brought with us into religion *the old man, who is corrupted according to the desire of error.* (Eph. iv. 22.) No miracle will be worked in order to rid us of him. God's grace will be given us, but we must do our share—strive to conquer OURSELF. What else are we making the Exercises for at the present moment ? Nor need we lose heart at the magnitude of our undertaking, looked at as a whole. *The slothful man saith : There is a lion without. I shall be slain in the midst of the streets* (Prov. xxii. 13) ; and

we may suppose stayed within doors. The holy women, on the contrary, discussed their difficulties on their way to the sepulchre : *Who shall roll us back the stone? . . . for it was very great.* Yet they went bravely on and, when they arrived, *looking they saw the stone rolled back.* (Mark xvi. 3, 4.) An angel had been sent from heaven to do it (Matt. xxviii. 2)—quite possibly in reward of their anticipated, persevering devotion in face of difficulties. And the same Power that came to their assistance is equally ready to come to our own, but only on condition that we do as they did. We have then to face our difficulties—who should know them better than we who examine our conscience twice a day ?—and deal with them one at a time and, *if every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men.* (*Imit.* I. xi. 5.)

My second professional object is the sanctification of my neighbour—whether directly in giving missions or retreats, the care of a parish, or education and training of the young ; or indirectly by prayer, or duty faithfully performed at home. No one will ever know, in this life, how much good has been effected by this last. St. Aloysius never preached a sermon, and the duties of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez kept him at the porter's lodge ; yet the influence of both will be felt for all time. *A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city* (Prov. xviii. 19), and when a religious goes forth the prayers and good works of his community go with him. But, generally speaking, the success of my efforts on my neighbour's behalf will be proportionate to the efforts I have put forth on my own. It is only when I am filled with the Spirit of God myself that I shall have anything to spare for the needs of others. Even then I shall be helpless of myself for : *neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth : but God that giveth the increase.* (1 Cor. iii. 7.) And how hope for this *increase*

if I have not at least honestly tried to make myself a fitting channel for it ?

Our reward. The difference between the service of God and the service of the world is, that the world only looks at results, while God has regard to the intention. *Man seeth those things that appear ; but the Lord beholdeth the heart.* (1 Kings xvi. 7.) To endeavour honestly to do God's work is to succeed ; and He will richly reward our efforts in heaven hereafter. As to immediate and tangible results, those who work for others have to bear in mind that, although they do their utmost and God give His grace, those in whose interest they labour may reject it—for God compels no one. Men returned from the Crucifixion unconverted, and one of the thieves died impenitent at the side of the Saviour of the world Himself. And when we think of the years we have been in religion, the outward and inward graces we have received, and see that even now we are not such as we ought to be ; can we wonder that our neighbour, who has not enjoyed our spiritual advantages—or perhaps anything like them—is not immediately converted just because we urge it ?

But, even in this present life, we shall have the security of knowing that our temporal work and our spiritual work are both directed to the same object —that we are always *about* (*our*) *Father's business.* (Luke ii. 49.) And we shall have peace—the nearest approach to perfect happiness here below. Peace was the first and last word of our divine Lord's life on earth. It was peace *the multitude of the heavenly army* brought to *men of good will* (Luke ii. 14)—and who are men of good will if not those who have left all and are trying to follow Christ ? It was peace, again, that our Lord left to His disciples after the Last Supper (John xiv. 27), and only a short time previous to their setting forth on their apostolic career—the same career that is also our

own. And, at our last hour, how thankful shall we be for our vocation and to God who gave us the grace to accept it. How lightly then shall we esteem the difficulties that seem so formidable now. And, if ever we are tempted to regret the absence of what the world calls pleasure, or complain of the monotony of our life; we may remember that the pleasure of dying without pain is greater than the pain of living without pleasure.

(2) Prayer

In the previous Consideration we glanced briefly at the general obligations consequent on the acceptance of a vocation to the religious state. We have now to consider them in detail. The first and most important of these obligations is our own sanctification. This, because it will be all to no purpose that we preach to and convert others if we become castaways ourselves (1. Cor. ix. 27); and also because we cannot hope to convert them to a better life unless we are at least trying to lead better lives ourselves—no one can give what he has not got. The next step, therefore, is to consider how our own sanctification can best be effected.

First of all, experience should have taught us by this time that we are completely powerless even to avoid evil, much less do good and advance in virtue, by our own unaided exertions. Not only is *the imagination and thought of man's heart prone to evil from his youth* (Gen. viii. 21); but we are not even *sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves* (2. Cor. iii. 5) —that is, anything good. No force of character, no strength of will, no "high principles," as the world calls them, will suffice us: it is impossible to live a supernatural life by merely natural means. And if our life in religion is not supernatural, we are *as a stranger in*

the land and as a wayfaring man turning in to lodge. (Jer. xiv. 8.)

So our sufficiency must come from God, *who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will.* (Phil. ii. 13.) And since he who is bound to the end is bound to the means, we, who have bound ourselves to seek our own sanctification, are bound to employ the means: Prayer.

(*a*) Every good work is a prayer in itself. Then the life of a religious must be a perpetual prayer, for has he not abandoned his worldly concerns in order to work for God, whose voice he hears in the commands of his superior? Whether the works be temporal—*e.g.*, the gift of a cup of water (Mark ix. 40); or spiritual, as in the case of the conversion of a sinner (Jas. v. 20); they are good and will be rewarded as such. The Blessed in heaven *rest from their labours. For their works follow them.* (Apoc. xiv. 13.) But, to be a prayer, these works must be good in themselves, or at least indifferent; performed at the proper time, and with at least the habitual intention of pleasing God. This intention is usually renewed daily at the morning offering: *For to thee will I pray: O Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear my voice.* (Ps. v. 4.)

(*b*) And excellent and continual prayer is also found in elevation of the mind to God, *i.e.*, that state of recollection which it is the object of our rules to promote. *All men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and by attending to these good things that are seen, could not understand him that is.* (Wisd. xiii. 1.) If then the wonders of God's visible creation should appeal to the heart of mankind in general, how much more should it be so in the case of His religious. But, independently of external objects, everything in his life speaks to him of God: the Real Presence in his domestic chapel, the constant religious exercises, his own work and that of his brethren—all having no object

but God and His glory. *And these words which I command thee shall be in thy heart . . . and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping or rising.* (Deut. vi. 6-7.)

We want to save our souls. The world around us is filled with turmoil and ever ready to follow *some new thing* (Acts xvii. 21)—with consequent distraction and disquiet. Only in the presence of God is that peace to be found without which we cannot save them; and the peace of God dwelleth not in the unquiet soul. We want to help others to save their souls too. How bring them to peace if we are not at peace ourselves? How persuade them of the blessedness of living in the presence of God, if is evident that we are, in heart and mind, just as much in the world as they are?

(*c*) Excellent as these two forms of prayer are, they are not sufficient. For there are times when *thou shalt enter into thy chamber and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret.* (Matt. vi. 6.) Then, casting aside all thoughts of men and things, we commune with God, *i.e.*, enter into His presence in spirit and hold familiar yet reverent intercourse with Him. He is our Father, and desires nothing so much as that we should regard Him as such. We are His children, and should esteem it our greatest privilege—as it is our highest honour—to be able to enter into direct communication with Him by prayer. Prayer is in fact the sole way to that intimacy with God which religious life aspires to secure. The ideal family is that in which there is complete identity of interests and affections—not only between the head and the members in general, but between the head and each member in particular. This is shown, not by obedience to the wishes of the father *or* constant demonstrations of affection, but by both combined. The same holds good of the spiritual family. God not only cares for humanity in the mass, but also in the individual. And He desires that each

one should not only fulfil all his obligations materially, but also frequently advert to the motive, *i.e.*, that whatever we undertake we do it for His sake. And unless we approach Him in prayer we may lose sight of this motive, and thus separate ourselves from Him. Prayer unites us to God, brings us to see things as He sees them, leads us to identify our interests with His, to make His will our own, accept all that it may seem good to Him to send us, desiring nothing but what He desires. Thus prayer is the best and only means to the pure love of God—the love that loves Him for Himself.

Not the least of the advantages of prayer is the opportunity it affords us for fulfilling our duty of thanksgiving. We are all ready to ask for God's gifts and graces and to accept them when He sends them ; but we are not so ready to return thanks for them. And yet thanksgiving is an integral part of prayer : *in everything, by prayer and supplication,* with thanksgiving, *let your petitions be made known to God.* (Phil. iv. 6.) First of all, we have to give thanks to God for His own great glory (*propter magnam gloriam tuam.* Ord. Miss.). Then, for that He, so great, so infinite in all perfections, should deign to care for us His creatures : *Who is as the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, and looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth ?* (Ps. cxii. 5-6.) And lastly, we have to thank Him for His innumerable benefits to ourselves personally—all undeserved on our part, and sometimes received as a matter of course.

Finally : in prayer we ask for all things necessary both for soul and body—observing the right order : the spiritual first, and the temporal only for the sake of the spiritual. Here we note the order observed in the best of all prayers—the Lord's Prayer. Of the various requests, only one is for a temporal favour—our daily bread, which we must have if we are to live and serve God. True it is that *your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask Him* (Matt. vi. 8) ;

but He wishes to be asked. He would have us open our inmost hearts to Him, make Him the confidant of all our cares, and implore His guidance and protection in our journey from here to eternity. And He has promised that *him that cometh to me, I will not cast out.* (John vi. 37.)

This form of prayer—in the silence and solitude of our own chamber—not seldom renders us the important service of convincing us of our entire dependence on God, for many an individual who can give impressive and effective instructions on prayer to others not unfrequently finds himself powerless to make even a comparatively satisfactory prayer on his own behalf. Moreover, it acts as a corrective to possible aberrations in the other two. For example: even the best of good works may lose its motive, unless that motive is frequently adverted to—as was remarked above. The work is interesting, and poor human nature easily comes to lose sight of God and love the work for its own sake. Men applaud, call us "devoted," possibly "saints" (!), and lo, we are working to be seen by men. (Matt. vi. 1.) The work fails: people are not converted, repulse us, are ungrateful; and we lose heart and cry: *To what purpose is this waste?* (Matt. xxvi. 8.) Again: elevation of mind may become merely intellectual; or we may become too speculative —lose our habit of admiration for the simple things we can understand, in our researches into those we cannot and were never intended to. Thus the simple prayer of praise, thanksgiving and petition brings us face to face with God and our own limitations and necessities.

Certain times there are when we are bound to pray: at the hour of death—and God grant that we may have the use of our faculties to do so; in presence of grave temptation—and whoso delays to pray until that comes will not be without a grave temptation long.

And we might add : when matters are prospering with us. It may not be without significance that, out of four recorded occasions where it is specifically stated that our Lord prayed, three were after He had achieved what we should call a triumph : after the feeding of the five thousand, when He knew they would make Him a king by force (John vi. 15) ; when, after numerous miracles, they sought Him in the desert, with : *All seek for thee* (Mark i. 37) ; and when his fame *went abroad the more.* (Luke v. 16.) And I, when things go well with me ? Spiritually : In my abundance, I say : *I shall never be moved.* (Ps. xxix. 7.) Temporally : *The beloved grew fat and kicked*—was getting along too well, evidently, and so *he forsook God who made him.* (Deut. xxxii. 15.) We note also, that it was only Job's prosperity that induced Satan to take special interest in him and his affairs.

In like manner : when I am in desolation, *when I beheld the earth, and lo it was void and nothing : and the heavens, and there was no light in them* (Jer. iv. 23), then, more than ever, is it incumbent on me to pray—after the example of my Master who, *being in an agony, prayed the longer.* (Luke xxii. 43.)

And to sum up : prayer is necessary in order to lead a Christian life at all. And if he must pray whose essential obligations end at the observance of the Commandments, what need has not he of prayer who has undertaken to follow the Counsels and—would he be perfect—not only in the letter but in the spirit. If a religious neglect his prayer, not only has he *trouble upon trouble . . . because he has no comfort within, and is hindered from seeking any without* (*Imit.* I. xxv. 7), but worse may follow : All spiritual deficiencies, all faults, all falls, and even the most serious wanderings out of the right path, all proceed from this single source —a want of constancy in prayer. (*Fr. de Ravignan, S.J.*)

Prayer is difficult. And the difficulties arise partly from ourselves, partly from the devil and partly from the nature of prayer itself.

We can make prayer more difficult for ourselves by want of recollection at other times, and by our worldliness: *He that is weak in spirit, and in a manner yet carnal and inclined to sensible things, can hardly withdraw himself wholly from earthly desires.* (*Imit.* I. vi. 1.) And as if this were not sufficient, it is against the interests of Satan that we should pray. When he sees a sinner on his knees, he knows that it is a soul seeking to escape from him; and in the prayers of a priest or religious he is quick to detect a scheme for the frustration of his own designs. Small wonder then that he tries to induce lassitude and distaste for prayer in us, to tempt us to shorten and, if possible, to abandon it altogether.

And prayer is difficult from its very nature.* It is out of the ordinary, and anything out of the ordinary is difficult. Ask a labourer to compose a letter, and—you see! Prayer takes a person out of his element—the natural—and places him in a rarefied one—the supernatural. Mountaineers tell us that, after reaching an altitude of 15,000 ft. or so, the simple effort to keep alive is a painful struggle owing to the rarefaction of the atmosphere. Tobias caught a fish and *drew him out upon the land: and he began to pant before his feet.* (Tobit. vi. 4.) Why? The water is its natural element: the dry land is not. You are not surprised at the fish: don't be surprised at yourself when you find it difficult to pray.

In prayer, our business is to raise ourselves out of this natural element of ours—the world—into the upper air; which is the natural element, not of this life but of the next. The wonder is, not that we find

* From *The Priest, His Character and Work.* The Very Rev. Canon James Keatinge.

prayer difficult but that we manage to pray at all. And our business here must be so to spiritualize our life as to make this rarefied, supernatural atmosphere the natural element of our life here, as it will be hereafter.

Then : what does God want from us when we pray ? Does He want a perfect prayer ? or does He want the attempt to pray ? If He wants a perfect prayer, He wants something that imperfect man cannot give. But He will be satisfied with the honest attempt. He wants the time—the time we might spend in doing something else. He wants the effort to do this best thing in the best possible way ; when we might accomplish some lower object more successfully. He desires to see us overcome our natural indolence and repugnance for His sake. So He values our prayers for their intention not for their success ; and for the endeavour rather than for the result.

(3) Good Works

Although prayer is the best of good works and every good work, performed with a right intention, is a prayer, they can be considered separately. Prayer, in the strict sense, is interior—secret intercourse with God. Good works are exterior—the various activities in which we engage for our own benefit or that of others. Nevertheless they are mutually dependent for, either our prayers give force and direction to our works or there is something amiss with the spirit in which we pray.

Our first and most important good work is our own salvation. To that end, we have not only to pray but also to work. Work, in the first instance, to make ourselves good and perfect religious according to the spirit of our Order or Institute. This, because our first con-

cern is with ourselves—it will avail us nothing to save others if we are to be lost ; and also that the more perfect instruments we make ourselves for God's service, the greater will be the fruit we shall produce in our neighbour. It may be that, for years after our entry into religion, we shall never be employed in exterior apostolic work—our divine Lord Himself practised for thirty years what He was to teach in three —but those years, far from being barren, may be fruitful in good works if we will only have it so. For those who are actually sent forth can always be effectively assisted by the prayers and good works of those who remain at home. This should be a great incentive and encouragement to those who will never be employed upon direct apostolic work, such as preaching or education. Their duties may be humble ; but so were those of our Lord at Nazareth for thirty years—we may not see our thirty years out. They may never be seen or heard in public—so much the better for them ! They are certain of the reward without having to face the risks and temptations of publicity. And by the faithful and exact performance of their office, they are taking their part and a most important one—in promoting the glory of God. And even though we do aspire to the priesthood or the teaching office, let us not slur over the duties of to-day and dream of those of years to come. If I am a novice, I may never be anything else—St. Stanislaus was not.

The same applies to the matter of studies, when obedience enjoins us to enter upon them : my studies may be the active good works of my life-time. This was the case with St. Aloysius and St. John Berchmans ; it may be my own. In spite of that, I ought to infuse as much zeal and energy into my studies as if I were certain of a long career in the colleges or on the mission-field. This gathers more importance from the fact that the studies of an ecclesiastical student of any kind

largely depend on his own conscience. Lectures and instructions are given, by which he is bound to profit to a certain degree. But, after them ? Is he to become a proficient as far as he can, or be content to remain a mediocrity ? The work he is preparing to do is God's work ; he will hope for God's blessing upon it later on : how hope for it with any confidence if, in times past, he neglected to make himself efficient for it ?

And now we suppose our first professional end to have been provided for as far as possible, and the foundations of the second duly and properly laid. The time has come for active labour for the spiritual good of others. This is a work that blesseth both him that gives and him that receives ; for we cannot be solicitous for the spiritual needs of others without being constantly reminded of our own, nor prepare others for their last end without adverting to the fact that a like end awaits ourselves. Further : we can gauge the intensity of our own faith by the zeal and earnestness we display on behalf of our neighbour : *Shew me thy faith without works : and I will shew thee, by works, my faith.* (Jas. ii. 18.) Indeed, as far as I am concerned, my neighbour only exists for me ; and I have to prove my love for God by showing my love for him. This applies not only to spiritual needs but also to those that are temporal and material. St. James assures us that *he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins* (v. 20) ; and our Lord Himself promises a like reward to those who shall have cared for *one of these my least brethren* in his need of alms or sympathy. (Matt. xxv. 40.)

The good works of a priest or religious can be either direct or indirect—both having the same object : to

gain their neighbour for God. Of the first, the most important is undoubtedly preaching and instruction.

That preaching is not a work to be undertaken lightheartedly the Church shows by her long and careful training of those who are to undertake the duty. Before our Lord Himself preached His first sermon He prepared Himself by a retreat of forty days on Quarantania. The Apostles, who were to *teach all nations* (Matt. xxviii. 19), were directed to remain in Jerusalem *till you be endued with power from on high* (Luke xxiv. 49); while St. Paul only ventured upon his apostolic functions after three years' preparation, at the end of which he *went to Jerusalem to see Peter* (Gal. i. 18), and—presumably—receive official recognition from the Head of the Church.

And now it has come to my turn: I am to preach to the people. How shall I set about it? *He that cleareth up a question shall prepare what to say: and so, having prayed, he shall be heard.* (Ecclus. xxxiii. 4.) I have to clear up, not merely *a* question but *the* question—or at least make it as clear as I can. We are very apt to presume a much more extended and profound knowledge of Christian doctrine on the part of our hearers than is actually the case and consequently to pass over the "simple" things. Whereas these things, obvious as they appear to us, may seem words of most profound wisdom to them, and convey exactly the instruction needed. Nor does simplicity imply lack of necessity for preparation. However simple my sermon, it is the Word of God I am dealing with; and though I could never deal with it worthily, let me do so as little unworthily as I can.

And having prayed. What do I want to do when I preach? To preach a "great" sermon? If so, I fear me that I am but *sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* (1. Cor. xiii. 1.) To convert those who need it, and confirm those already converted? Then I must

ask God that *giveth the increase* to give it to me. (1 Cor. iii. 7.) Even St. Paul—who, as we might suppose, could safely have trusted himself to preach *out of the abundance of the heart* (Luke vi. 45)—committed his sermons not only to his own prayers but also to those of others : *praying withal for us also, that God may open to us a door of speech to speak the mystery of Christ . . . that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.* (Col. iv. 3-4.)

Priests or not, we have to instruct—why else are the young confided to our care, except that they may receive definite religious training ? In these days of incessant inspection and examination in secular subjects, there must ever be a temptation to relegate the religious instruction to the background—the end of the day when the children are tired—perhaps to shelve it on occasions in favour of something else. In reality, it is the most important event of the day : here and now, the children are to learn from us the principles and practice of the religion by which they are to save their souls. Here and now : for the termination of a child's school or college career probably marks the end of its study of religion ; for only a few will have energy or interest enough to pursue the matter further. Thereafter, save for the grace of God protecting them, they will have to fight the battle of life alone, amid not only the temptations of life but also the prevailing chaos of religious beliefs or unbeliefs. No doubt every one of them "knows the catechism," *i.e.*, knows it by heart. But knowing the catechism and understanding what it means are two different things. And understanding the catechism intellectually and gaining such a grasp of the religion it treats of as will make that religion the guide and support of their daily life in the world are two different things also. We have not only to teach but to train, *i.e.*, imbue our pupils with such good and

Christian principles now, that, when the time comes for them to leave us, these principles may have become a fixed habit of life.

A very important, and indeed necessary, good work is that of house-to-house visitation—in this country at least. In countries where everybody is, at least professedly, a Catholic the case is different. There being only one form of religion, those who do not practise it are known—and they perfectly understand that, in the last extremity, they will have to return to their faith or lose their souls. There is thus a vast consensus of public opinion making for good. With us it is not so. The Catholics are scattered among people of all religions or none at all; while the trend of public opinion is certainly anticatholic, but mostly indifferent to all dogmatic religion, and not seldom materialistic. Against this dead weight of popular feeling, the good have to be fortified, the timorous encouraged, and the careless roused to the danger of their own desire "to do as others do." And as if this anticatholic feeling were not sufficient, there is the difficulty of the mixed marriage which, as is well known, forms a fruitful source of the "leakage" from the Catholic body—not only in parents but also in their children after them.

Against all this, there is only one preventive, or at least palliative: regular and systematic visitation. Besides which—just as social visits bind together a circle of friends, so the visits of the priests bind the members of a congregation to their clergy, their Church and therefore to God. The priest who is a familiar sight in his district ceases to be looked upon as merely the official "minister"—only to be seen and heard on Sunday—and is regarded as the father and friend of his people. Again, it is only by personal intercourse that he can get to know them and their needs, and they can learn to have confidence in him. And to carry out

this duty efficiently requires a constant effort of self-denial. For example : how much more pleasant it is—especially on cold winter evenings—to settle down comfortably to his books at home, than to go forth on a round of visits. And yet—for the most part—it is only in the evening that he can be at all certain of finding the men at home : and it is the *men* we want to influence. If the father of the family attends to the practices of religion, the chances are much greater that the members of it will do so too. Once more : how much more agreeable to confine our visits to those families who are devoted to their religion, reverence the priestly office and receive the priest himself as an honoured friend. Yet : *they that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.* (Mark ii. 17.) While, therefore, I must not neglect the just, it is the sinner who has a special claim on me. And the sinner can be very unpleasant ! He looks askance at the priest—his Reverence is evidently going to inquire about Mass, duties and the children, perhaps about that marriage out of Church ; and he has a bad conscience in these matters. He is reserved, may be surly, and a visit seems useless. Yet the first step in bringing such a one back to the Church is to bring him to cease to be hostile to, or at least suspicious of the priest, her agent ; and the rest may follow. Almighty God has worked in the same way. When His people had forgotten Him and given themselves up to material things, He sent His Son to earth, as a Man, to gain the hearts of other men. And human nature is the same now as it was then.

Besides these direct good works on behalf of Catholics, opportunities may present themselves of working indirectly for all, whether Catholics or not—observing the right order : the temporal for the sake of the spiritual. Our Lord gave the key to good works of this

sort when He said: *I will* come *and heal him* (Matt. viii. 7)—personal service. In these days, nearly every one will *say*; many will *give*—especially when giving involves no self-denial: *for all they did cast in of their abundance.* (Mark, xii. 44.) But few there are who will *do*: give personal service—and those only as long as suits their convenience. Christ rendered personal service to all: He fed the hungry, healed the sick, received at inconvenient times—*e.g.*, Nicodemus, who came by night, no doubt others too—accepted invitations from publicans and sinners, befriended the woman taken in adultery, paid a visit of condolence to the bereaved relatives of Lazarus. Nor did He disdain to assist at innocent social merry-making: there was not only a marriage at Cana of Galilee but a feast after it; and His first miracle was wrought to save the success of the occasion. And sickness, poverty, misfortune, bereavement, appeals for counsel, the social meeting for the public good—these and many others of a like nature are the opportunities for personal service that God puts in my way. Who can tell if any one of them may not result in the reclamation of a soul, either to the Church or to a better life? And even if all that seems to be gained for the moment be an increased respect for the Catholic Church and an assuagement of bitterness towards her—even that is well worth all the pains and self-denial bestowed.

So I am called by my vocation not only to prayer but to work. Our divine Lord attached such importance to good works that He appealed to them as affording evidence of His divine mission: *though you will not believe me, believe the works.* (John x. 38.) And He left it in command to His Apostles and those who should come after them: *So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* (Matt. v. 16.)

(4) Suffering

My thoughts are not your thoughts : nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. (Isa. lv. 8.) Nowhere is this more evident than in this question of Suffering. Man asks what a person can *do* : Almighty God tests him by his readiness to *bear*. Man believes in the self-reliant, independent individual : God favours the one who will be guided and submit. He promises His blessing to *the poor in spirit* ; and the world has no use for such. (Matt. v. 3.) The world appreciates the man who walks boldly into the chief seats : Christ would have His followers *sit down in the lowest place*. (Luke xiv. 10.) Human nature wants to walk abroad, *clad in long robes, to be saluted in the market-place* (Mark xii. 38) *and to be called by men, Rabbi* (Matt. xxiii. 7) ; and Christ will not have this.

It has always been so. When the Master foretold His Passion in detail His own disciples *understood none of these things*. (Luke xviii. 34.) The mother of two of them asked, on their behalf, a seat on either hand of Him in His kingdom. Christ would not promise that, but only that *my chalice*—the chalice of Suffering—*indeed you shall drink*. (Matt. xx. 23.) And on the morning of the Ascension they were still of the worldly mind : *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?* (Acts i. 6.) Success they could understand and appreciate, but Suffering was beyond them.

The virtues may be divided into two classes : active and passive. The active virtues are those which, for the most part, consist in being " up and doing ; " in contradistinction to the passive ones, which show themselves in readiness to remain quiet and suffer. The world itself understands the active virtues—especially

when they assume a purely material form: feeding, clothing, nursing, and so on. When activity trends towards the spiritual, the world is by no means enthusiastic. But for the passive virtues: being poor when one might be rich, leading a single life the better to serve God, and suchlike, the world has no sympathy. And when it comes to obeying a fellow-creature for God's sake, readiness to forgive injuries and cheerful submission to discomfort and disappointment, the world loses patience altogether and begins to talk of something else.

Now it is not too much to say that every spiritual work has been, is, and always must be, founded on Suffering. Take the Church herself. Her divine Founder led a life of poverty and suffering. She herself was founded on ruins—the ruins of our Lord's three years of work. Note the state of affairs on the first Good Friday. The Master crucified as a malefactor, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all save the beloved disciple. Ruin on every side and yet—you see! Persecution dogged the footsteps of the early Church, and again—you see! The persecutors are nought but a memory and the Church remains. And from that day to this, it has been the same with Catholic good works: poverty, ridicule, disapproval, active opposition even—nothing abundant except Suffering. And so much is this the rule that when a work finds instantaneous approval and unanimous support and seems to carry all before it, there may be room for grave doubt as to its permanence.

And now we have to ask ourselves: Why, when the Master suffered, are the servants to be exempt? We are glib enough in our prayers about "following in His footsteps;" but we have to bear in mind that He walked to Calvary as well as to Thabor. And when we

talk of "being clothed in the same garments as He was," do we include a purple robe and crown of thorns in our spiritual wardrobe? Now the test of all these fine sentiments is: Am I prepared to suffer for Christ's sake? And not in public, where I shall gain some repute—indeed, a hair-shirt worn outside must be rather pleasant than otherwise, at any rate in cold weather—but in secret, unnoticed and unknown? And to descend from the general to the particular: What is the form of Suffering I most object to, and how much of it can I "stand," as the boys say?

But no one can be even a tolerable religious without learning to accept Suffering. And mark well: Suffering does not imply absence of feeling, even when accepted in a religious spirit. "It is a mistake (says Fr. Coleridge) into which we are constantly falling, that the natural sorrows of the saints are less heavily felt by them, because they are saints. This is an echo of the gross and rude opinion that would make our Lord's sufferings less intense because He was God; or the dolours of our Lady less piercing, because she knew that her Son would rise again on the third day. Sanctity makes the heart more tender, it bares it to a hundred wounds, which more common hearts would hardly feel. Worldliness and sin harden hearts, not sanctity." (*Life of St. Teresa.*)

Generally speaking, all religious life is Suffering in some degree. The "old man" within us rebels at observing rules and punctuality: *because it is commanded.* He jibs still more at the constant bending of his will. Life in a community means Suffering for some: it did for St. John Berchmans—"my greatest mortification," he called it. Being a subject means Suffering; and as for being a superior, a cynical rector is reported to have expressed his opinion that "there is only one thing worse than being a curate: and that is having one."

Now all this, it may be argued, is " only in the way of business," and therefore to be expected. Nevertheless, if a person goes no further than being a good subject and member of the community, he does a great deal. But there is a further degree ; and it consists in willingly accepting undeserved or gratuitous Suffering—undeserved in the human sense for, of course, no Suffering can ever be *really* undeserved. For example :

(i) Being ignored or passed over. A man has some special talent, which he could employ to great advantage in God's service, had he only the opportunity. And that opportunity never arrives. And so, years roll by, and he who had prepared himself so carefully for—preaching, let us say—finds himself still in a class-room, or keeping accounts and *serving tables*, so to speak. (Acts vi. 2.) What did he come into religion for, you ask, except to be obedient ? Quite so, and he is obedient : but to the natural man it means Suffering nevertheless.

(ii) Being thwarted in our efforts for good. The " old man " in religion is very much the same as he is outside it. And, as often as not, two people who have each of them an axe to grind want to use the same stone to grind it with. Each is perfectly certain that he is seeking the glory of God and nothing else. Each of them, again, is equally persuaded that—not only the grinding of *his* axe, but the grinding of it at that particular stone—is the only manner in which God's glory can be promoted. One has to yield ; and that yielding may mean the relinquishment of the dreams of years, not to mention what the Chinese call " Loss of Face." And though the good religious accept the decision of Authority as he should, for the natural man it still entails Suffering.

(iii) Failure in our efforts for the good of others. One of the greatest trials of priests and religious is to be found in the fact that so much of their work depends

on the good will of others. They may labour; but if the parties in whose interest they do so do not respond, it is all to no purpose—at any rate for the immediate moment. Without doubt they are working for the love of God, and their reward is certain; but they must be more than human if they are never afflicted at the lack of tangible result for all the zeal and charity expended.

(iv) The Suffering occasioned by good people—hardest of all to bear. We read in the lives of saints, that much of the criticism of, and opposition to their work came from excellent and well-intentioned persons, who either misunderstood the worker or doubted the advisability of the work. It is unnecessary to enlarge upon this in the presence of such abiding examples as the Curé of Ars and Cardinal Newman. As for the Curé, a petition was actually drawn up, requesting his removal from his parish—and this by priests! "They let the Gospel rest in the pulpits and preached everywhere on the poor Curé of Ars," said the holy man himself in after years. The Cardinal set his hand to all manner of good works: a university for Ireland—it fell through; an Oratory at Oxford—the scheme was wrecked twice; a new English translation of the Bible—it was forgotten and never again heard of. Can we suppose that neither of them suffered?

So too we, in our modest way sometimes. We propose to install some new work or improve the methods of one already existing; and lo, some colleague begins to pour cold water. "It has never been done before," says he, "no new-fangled ideas for me!" The dangers of a new departure, local conditions, the holy Rule itself perhaps, are each called upon in turn to support his contention. In the last resort he can appeal to the traditional maxims of the holy Founder—it is surprising what a number of strange things are fathered upon holy founders! Then there are two courses open

to us ; but each of them means Suffering. We may do battle for our project and possibly win the first encounter. But anti-innovators, as they call themselves, are persistent individuals and we shall have a long and arduous campaign, not improbably ending in our total defeat with immense loss. Contrariwise, we can acquiesce in the shelving of our scheme, and see openings lost and good work unattempted—leaving the entire matter in God's hands. This is the heroic method and requires a saint to carry out. If the like should happen to me, am I going to be that saint ?

Now : Almighty God wishes us to sanctify ourselves, not so much by our heroic activity as by our heroic patience. No good work is really safe until it has been tested by adversity. Quite possibly the house built on sand, of which our Lord spoke, might still be standing if the winds and floods had only let it alone. (Matt. vii. 27.) And the human good work is no exception to the rule. We are here on trial, that we may prove ourselves ; and man is not proved by his conduct when things go well with him, but by what he does when things go wrong. Had there been a better way of redeeming the world than that of Suffering our Lord would have adopted it. It is therefore the best and only way for us, and if we would be faithful followers of our Master we must be prepared to suffer too—not indeed by presuming to seek occasions which might easily be beyond our strength, but by our patient toleration of those that are actually sent us.

(5) The Devil and his Work

Any idea of a personal devil, or the interference of the Powers of Darkness in the affairs of mankind is,

for the most part, scouted by the worldly mind. But unless we are prepared to deny the truth of Holy Scripture altogether we are forced to admit that such a personality exists, and that his object is our ruin. Satan appeared to Eve under the form of a serpent (Gen. iii.); he was permitted to test the virtue of Job —though it is not related that he actually appeared to him. (Job i., ii.) He also approached our Lord at the Temptation and was allowed to move Him from place to place. (Matt. iv.) Satan *entered into* Judas Iscariot. (John xiii. 27.)

Satan and his angels are spiritual beings and therefore immortal. It is commonly supposed that their knowledge—like that of other angels—is intuitive, *i.e.*, immediately apprehended by the mind without process of reasoning. It does not extend to the secret thoughts of men, for that knowledge belongs to God alone: *For thou (O Lord my God) only knowest the heart of all the children of men.* (3 Kings viii. 39.) But it has to be remembered that this doctrine can only be applied with certainty to such of our thoughts as are wholly confined to our mind, for spirits may have power to observe and interpret the slightest affection of matter. They have no certain knowledge of the future: *Shew the things that are to come hereafter: and we shall know that ye are gods.* (Isa. xli. 23.) St. Augustine teaches that they do not know the interior state of man, otherwise Satan would not have wasted his strength in tempting one so firm in patience as Job.

There is good authority for believing that evil spirits are in some way restrained from knowing some of God's dealings with man—even such as they might otherwise learn by the use of their natural powers. Thus St. Paul preached a mystery *which none of the princes of this world knew. For if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.* (1 Cor.

ii. 8.) In this view, Satan—who, by his natural powers, would have recognized the fulfilment of prophecy in Christ—was hindered by divine intervention from doing so; and thus frustrated his own hopes for the final ruin of mankind by the part he took in procuring the death of the Redeemer. St. Ignatius the martyr thought that the marriage of our Lady to St. Joseph blinded Satan to the fact of the virginal conception of her Son. And this may account for the Temptation of our Lord Himself; for Satan would never have attempted the hopeless task of leading into sin one whom he knew to be the Son of God. It has even been suggested that the dream of Pilate's wife (Matt. xxvii. 19) was a last desperate effort on the part of the Evil One to stay the work he had set on foot—he having conceived a strong suspicion that he had made a mistake fatal to his cause.

That Satan has agents or assistants is equally clear: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* (Matt. xxv. 41.)

The objects Satan has in view are, of course, to lead souls to sin and so bring them to hell. This he does by means of temptation. Nevertheless, every temptation cannot be ascribed to the devil, for their is another factor for consideration: the native corruption of man's heart, *prone to evil from his youth* (Gen. viii. 21); *But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured.* (Jas. i. 14.) Of course, even in this case, it is possible that the devil and his agents co-operate indirectly. But outside the cases in which man is a contributory cause of his own wrong-doing, there still remain a number of instances in which the devil interferes gratuitously. The most extreme form of this is diabolical possession, in which evil spirits take control of the person affected, independently of the soul that informs him. Holy Scripture

leaves us in no sort of uncertainty as to the reality of this at the time of our Lord: *Oftentimes hath he (the evil spirit) cast him into the fire and into waters to destroy him* (Mark ix. 21)—and many other places. Not only are we nowhere told that the powers of Satan in this matter have been restricted since then; but our Lord distinctly implies the contrary: *These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils.* (Mark xvi. 17.) In the first ages of Christianity even the simplest and rudest of the faithful sometimes exercised this power; but about the year A.D. 400 a special rite of ordination for the office of exorcist was established. This still continues; but according to the present discipline of the Church it is only priests who are authorized to use the power—and they only with permission of their bishop. The constant belief of the Church in the possibility of diabolical possession is thus perfectly clear; and, despite anticatholic prejudice, it is said that certain forms of insanity can only be explained in this manner; while a certain Protestant missionary was so impressed by his experiences in the matter that he was constrained to write a large work on *Demon Possession in China* (1897).

Holy Scripture is also plain on direct incitation to sin, *e.g.*, our First Parents, Judas, Ananias and Saphira.

Beyond this, there are demonic molestations which are not temptations to sin. Thus, Satan tormented Job (ii. 7), the Egyptians (Ps. lxxvii. 49), the high priest (Zach. iii. 1). And within the last century we have the experiences of St. John Vianney, Curé of Ars, whose nights were made terrible for thirty years by the sensible visitations of the Powers of Darkness.

And in general: whatever form it may assume—possession, temptation or simple molestation—Holy

Church constantly asserts her belief in the power of Satan for evil. For example : in the blessing of Holy Water she prays that it " may become water exorcized for driving away all power of the enemy, and may have strength to uproot and supplant the enemy himself, with his rebel angels." Again : in the Preface to the Benediction of the Font on Holy Saturday, the priest —speaking in the name of the living God—commands every unclean spirit to recede from the water which is to serve for the regeneration of souls. And so forth . . .

The unanimous teaching of the Fathers goes to show that each of us has a Guardian Angel ; but the nature and extent of his ministrations are quite unknown. In like manner, St. John Chrysostom thinks it not unreasonable to suppose that every one may also be provided with an attendant devil.

Now, while it is, of course, impossible to assert that any given temptation which may assail us is actually the work of the devil, it seems by no means impossible that it may be so. Since Satan has found his methods so successful from the very first he is not likely to have abandoned them—rather may he have improved upon and perfected them in the light of some thousands of years' experience of human weakness. Holy Scripture supplies three instances in which it is asserted that the temptation in question was actually due to the influence of Satan : may he not endeavour to tempt us to our ruin in the same manner ?

(i) Our First Parents. We saw in the meditation on the *Two Standards* that if sin is proposed at once to the intended victim he may recoil. So also if Satan had proposed at once that Eve should eat of the forbidden fruit she might have rejected the suggestion. Consequently it was necessary to proceed cautiously, step by step. Wherefore he pretended to believe that

the prohibition extended to all the trees in the garden. Corrected on this point, he went on to suggest doubts as to the consequences of disobedience : *No, you shall not die the death* (Gen. iii. 4) ; and followed up the evident impression he had made by the assurance that *your eyes shall be opened : and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* (5.) Eve thereupon took the matter into consideration by going to look at the tree, and the rest followed. Now the point to be insisted upon is that Satan set himself to break down the first safeguards one by one. He induced Eve to consider the matter, to question the authority, to go to look at the prohibited object ; surmising correctly—for this was his first attempt on mankind—*that he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.* (Ecclus. xix. 1.)

What are the first safeguards of a religious ? The Rules. Were a grave, or even a deliberate venial sin proposed for the consideration of such a one, he would certainly reply in the words of our Lord in the same circumstances : *Begone, Satan !* (Matt. iv. 10.) So it is necessary to commence a little further back : Your Rules now ; they don't bind under pain of sin. They were made by human and fallible mortals like yourself. Many of them have been out of date long since : in any case they can't be observed in this country. Besides, you can always pull up long before there is any danger of sin. Can I be so sure of that ? Even supposing it to be so, I did not enter religion to walk on the edge of even venial sin, but to try to become perfect, and my Rules were given me to help me to do so.

But my Rules are more than that to me : they are my first safeguards against sin. If I observe them as perfectly as I can I am as safe as I can make myself : *Do what is in thy power, and God will be with thy good will.* (*Imit.* I. vii. 1.) And the first step towards an infringement of a Rule is to question its necessity, utility or authority. Besides which, contempt for the

authority of a Rule implies contempt for the Authority who made it, with the added suggestion that *I am not as the rest of men* (Luke xviii. 11) and have no need of protection. Have I not? *Behold two kings* (*our First Parents in a state of original justice and sanctity*) *could not stand before him* (*Satan*), *and how shall we be able to resist?* (2 Kings x. 4.)

(ii) The ruin of Judas Iscariot we have already considered at length. He fell by yielding to an inordinate affection which developed into a consuming passion—the crisis of which was the direct work of Satan: *the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him.* (John xiii. 2.) We were also reminded that there are other inordinate affections than love of money. Having been successful with Judas, what guarantee is there that Satan will not attempt the same with others—including myself?

(iii) The first recorded interference of Satan in the affairs of the Christian Church is very suggestive. The spirit that animated the first converts made by the Apostles is an ideal that should animate every religious community. Living in the world they were not of the world. *And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul. Neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own: but all things were common unto them.* (Acts iv. 32.) And so, as it was evidently useless to attempt to destroy such an admirable spirit entirely, Satan would appear to have endeavoured to render individuals less fervent and self-sacrificing than their brethren. And the persons he selected were Ananias and his wife, while the means were the same as those by which he had, only just lately, tempted Judas to his ruin: money.

These two, we are told, sold a piece of land and brought a certain part of the proceeds to the Apostles

for the service of the Church. There was no obligation on them to sell the land at all: *whilst it remained, did it not remain to thee?* Nor was there any obligation on them to surrender the entire price. The head and front of their offending consisted in giving part under pretence that it was the whole: *Tell me, woman, whether you sold the land for so much? And she said: Yea, for so much.* The whole incident would appear to have been of Satan's contriving: *Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart. . . ?* (Acts v.)

For lack of more precise information we may suppose one of two things: either that Ananias and Saphira having become Christians and finding the ideal too high for them—*i.e.*, to give all—were yet constrained to do something to save appearances; or that they were people of thoroughly good intentions who, when it came to the actual point of despoiling themselves and trusting to divine Providence, were overcome by human weakness.

For a religious, the *piece of land* consists not only in that which he *has*, but also in that which he *is*: HIMSELF in fact. The getting rid of material things may not present much difficulty—Satan himself interposed no obstacle to the sale of the land and surrender of part of the price. But the surrender of spiritual and intellectual things is such a difficult matter that we shall be happy if we can say we have achieved it at the hour of our death. Had Ananias and his wife forgone the remainder they would have been left in a state of dependence: if we surrender SELF we shall be left dependent, *i.e.*, surrender our independence.

Is it altogether impossible that Satan does the same to-day—in due proportion—with the modern Ananias, Saphira and myself? And how? By tempting us to be only half-hearted religious. Life in religion is hard to the natural man, but the hardness is part of

the price. Observance of Rules is difficult, but all part of the price. Obedience, humility and the rest are all difficult, but they are part of the price we undertook to pay. And if Satan cannot induce us to withhold the entire price he will be satisfied if he can prevail upon us to keep back part. Nor will he object very much maybe to our saving our own soul provided we save that of no one else. And this last I can always ensure by becoming a tepid, easy-going religious, who will be described as "a very good person, but in no sense an apostle, you know!"

So we have to pray that we may be protected not only against Satan without, but also from the SELF within—only too ready to listen to him and keep back part of the price: that we may not be overcome by monotony, yield to the natural disgust that sometimes comes upon us, discontinue our efforts because of ingratitude or outward want of success, take fright at difficulties—in a word: pay the whole price in our complete surrender of SELF.

In all these things, although we cannot assert that the devil is actually interfering at any given moment; still, we have to act as though it were so: *Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Pet. v. 8.) Against this we are reassured by St. Paul: *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.* (1 Cor. x. 13.) And finally: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him.* (Jas. i. 12.)

(6) Charity

It is related of St. John the Evangelist that, being reduced to the last extremity by the failing powers of old age, he nevertheless contrived to repeat: "My children, love one another." Wearied by the constant reiteration of the same precept, his disciples inquired the reason of it. "It is the Lord's command," he replied, "and if only that be complied with it will suffice."

Our divine Lord had in fact given such a command at His discourse after the Last Supper. And such importance did He attach to this *new commandment*, as He termed it, that He repeated it twice in identical words: they were to love one another: *as I have loved you.* (John xiii. 34, xv. 12.)

Thus did the Master lay down the great principle of charity among the brethren: as He had loved them, so were they to love each other. How then had He loved His disciples?

(i) He had done these twelve poor men the signal honour of choosing them to be His followers in preference to the great and learned of this world. He had further declared that *I will not now call you servants . . . but I have called you friends* (John xv. 15); and that *I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth* (Luke xxii. 27). Nor was this last a mere figure of speech, for He actually washed their feet (including those of Judas) after the Last Supper—a service usually rendered by slaves.

(ii) He had borne patiently with them. They had failed completely to understand the spiritual character of His mission. Redemption of the world by suffering they could not comprehend: *understood none of these things* (Luke xviii. 34); and Peter, just appointed Head

of the Church, *taking him, began to rebuke him*, when He spoke of it. (Matt. xvi. 22.)

(iii) He had been ever ready to forgive their faithlessness to Himself. Peter, who had denied Him, was confirmed in his office, with no more than a most distant reference to his fall—the demand for a *threefold* profession of love. (John xxi. 17.) As far as appears in Holy Scripture, no allusion was ever made to the flight of the Apostles from the Garden. There would have been pardon for Judas, had he only had the confidence to ask it; nor can we assert that he would not have been reinstated in the Apostolic College had he done so.

(iv) And, in spite of all their human weakness, the Master loved His disciples to the last: *having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.* (John xiii. 1.) Again was this no mere figure of speech. He who had laid down the ideal: *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (xv. 13), put it into actual practice Himself.

More than this: charity towards our neighbour is the means afforded us of showing our love for God Himself. Nothing we do can be of any advantage to God; and so He has placed our neighbour at our side and declared that He will accept the services we render him as services rendered to Himself. Conversely: our charity to our neighbour is the test of our love for God: *For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?* (1 John iv. 20.)

So we have to love God for Himself and our neighbour for God's sake. And how? As we love ourselves, and *no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.* (Eph. v. 29.) *All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.* (Matt. vii. 12.)

These being the main principles of charity laid down for us in the Gospel, we have to consider their application, both as between God and ourselves and as between ourselves and our brethren :—

God has bestowed upon each of us the special favour of a vocation. This does not in the least imply that He saw that we were better or more holy than others not so favoured. Rather, may it not imply that He saw we might lose our souls unless we were placed in a position of comparative safety ? In any case, we can all of us point to some persons whose life was much better than our own, and therefore more worthy of being called to His service. But He has, in His mercy, called us. Perhaps we are rather proud of ourselves and, like Peter, *begin to say unto him : Behold we have left all things and have followed thee.* (Mark x. 28.) But so has our neighbour—our brother in religion. He has left all that we have—possibly more. And it is hard indeed that he should have done so much and find himself *as a stranger in the land and as a wayfaring man turning in to lodge.* (Jer. xiv. 8.)

Our divine Lord called His disciples friends and—inferentially—those who should follow them in the apostolic calling—including, of course, ourselves. If He deigns to treat us as friends, how much more should we regard each of our brethren in the same light. And real friends : *let us not love in word nor in tongue* (*only*), *but in deed and in truth.* (1 John iii. 18.) Friendship, as the world understands it, is, for the most part, founded on personal attractions of mind or body, identity of tastes, and so on. Consequently it is easily interrupted, perhaps severed for life. And a single instance of disillusion or disagreement—perhaps something more trifling still—is often sufficient to effect this. But our friendship should arise first and chiefly from the fact that God commands it : *this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother* (iv. 21).

In the next place: if the ordinary Christian is commanded to love his enemies, persecutors and calumniators (Luke vi. 27, 28)—those who do not see eye to eye with, or oppose him—how much more have we to love our religious brethren who are what they are for the same reasons as ourselves: to get to heaven; to help others to get there too.

Charity, like all other virtues, is difficult; for it requires the rigorous suppression of the SELF of whom we have heard so much. A religious community is usually composed of persons of all ages, stations in life, talents and dispositions. And these have to be welded into one harmonious whole, not only if God's work is to be carried on as He wishes it should be, but even if life is to be at all tolerable. For religious persons have not the resource open to others: to quit their present environment and seek a more congenial one elsewhere; they have bound themselves to go whithersoever and live with whomsoever obedience sends them. And to live thus in continual charity with all requires the grace of God in a very high degree, supplemented by unceasing watchfulness and effort.

Be zealous for the better gifts, says St. Paul. (1 Cor. xii. 31.) *And I shew unto you yet a more excellent way.* And so saying, he devotes the whole of the ensuing chapter to charity. Having laid down that works, good in themselves—prophecy, alms, martyrdom even—entered upon from any other motive than the love of God are unprofitable; he enters into details concerning charity to our neighbour:—

Charity is patient, i.e., calmly enduring and tolerant. We have to *bear one another's burdens* (Gal. vi. 2), and sometimes the burden of one another. Those who are getting on in life are often suspicious and distrustful of modern ideas and methods. They remember how well

matters used to go in their own day; and it requires no small effort of patience and toleration to acquiesce in the present prevailing conditions—to remain young in heart while being old in body. On the other hand, those who are, comparatively speaking, beginning life are apt to be impatient of what they call "old world" ideas. Both parties need to be tolerant. The first may ask themselves why it was they laid the foundations? Did they expect nothing to be built upon them? The second may reflect that it was only because of the well-laid foundations that they were able to commence where they did: *others have laboured: and you have entered into their labours.* (John iv. 38.)

Again: very seldom does it happen that two people are of exactly the same opinion, outside questions of Catholic belief. And matters of policy, administration with its numberless details, can be fruitful sources of discord if we do not accord the opinions of others the same consideration we expect for our own. And even though our neighbour be in error, it is the error that we are at war with, not the man who errs.

Once more: we can be very clear-sighted concerning our neighbour's defects, especially when they affect ourselves. If the latter is the case, our duty is plain: to forgive. If they do not affect us, then we should turn a blind eye upon them. Those whose concern it is have not deemed it necessary to interpose; why should we, whose concern it is not? Moreover: how should we like our own defects to be exposed and commented upon—fully and impartially?

Wherefore, says St. Paul: *If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men.* (Rom. xii. 18.) And it can only be possible by mutual patience and toleration.

Charity is kind, continues the Apostle. In order to be kind without being obtrusive it is necessary to be thoughtful. No one can ever be kind who lives so much wrapped up in himself as to be oblivious of every

one else. *Rejoice with them that rejoice : weep with them that weep*, says the same Apostle. (Rom. xii. 15.) By this we understand sympathy—sincere sympathy, for it is to be *without dissimulation*. (9.) It is quite natural to think our own concerns the most important ; and if we do, can we be surprised that our neighbour should do the same ? And it may often require some effort to sink our own interests and enter whole-heartedly into those of another ; but each successful effort means a victory over SELF.

If we are thoughtful for others we shall be always ready to render them any service we can. Not a day passes without some opportunity for this. The service may be of the most trifling but, like the cup of water given in Christ's name (Mark ix. 40), it will have its reward. A specially excellent form of this service may be found in devotion to the aged and the sick. The first, incapacitated by years or infirmity, may have retired and his sphere of usefulness now know him no more ; while the latter is temporarily exiled from it. And both probably keenly feel the loneliness that comes from enforced seclusion and inactivity. It is the best form of charity, for it is disinterested : *they have not wherewith to make thee recompense.* (Luke xiv. 14.)

Finally : the test of the genuineness or otherwise of our charity in this matter of practical kindness will be found in our readiness to be kind to *all*—to those we like and those we don't, to those who are gracious and thank us and those who are ungracious and take everything as a matter of course. Also in our perseverance in well-doing in the last case. If our kindness pass unacknowledged and perhaps unnoticed, and we still continue it, we may have some confidence that we are charitable because God wishes us to be so, not because it is pleasant or men are grateful.

Charity (continues St. Paul) *is not puffed up*. We

are all inclined to think that whatever we do is well done, perhaps even that none of our brethren could have done it as well. And so SELF urges us to boast about ourselves and our doings. Thence arise arrogance and contempt for others—others who had probably done as well or better, had they only had our opportunities and facilities—both contrary to charity, evidently. Christ commanded us to *sit down in the lowest place* (Luke xiv. 10), and the man who did must have done so with the intention of remaining there, or our Lord would not have commended him. But when we boast we are placing ourselves in the highest place and, in so doing, lose two things : the merit we might have gained by a good work sufficiently well carried out ; and the very popular appreciation we seek to gain for ourselves—for no one takes a boaster at his own valuation. If we have an unfortunate tendency to blow our own trumpet, it is no bad thing to cast an eye backwards on our past life and we shall be reminded of occasions —not necessarily sinful—of which we are by no means proud and would only too willingly forget.

And lastly : Charity *is not provoked to anger* on the one hand, and *beareth all things* on the other. St. James warns us to be *slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God* (i. 19, 20)—a sufficient reason for incessant watchfulness over ourselves. Anger usually descends on its victim like a hurricane, blows violently for a brief space and passes on. And, like the hurricane also, it often leaves ruin behind it. An angry person generally says more than he means, always more than he would say if calm, and not seldom *one* thing that will never be forgotten. Our Lord deals with both parties thus : *If (thy brother) sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day be converted to thee, saying : I repent : forgive him.* (Luke xvii. 4.) This, of course, supposes amends to be made. But supposing it is not ? The offended party must still

forgive; and his forgiveness will have the merit of being for Christ's sake, not because incense has been offered to self-love: it will be the charity that *beareth all things.*

And forgiveness should be prompt: *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath* (Eph. iv. 26)—indeed, forgiving or unforgiving, it may never rise upon me again.

It should also be sincere, complete. Forgiveness that *says* it forgives, but shows by its deeds that it still bears rancour, *e.g.*, broods over offences, refuses to be amiable to or consort with the offender is no forgiveness at all. *So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother* from your hearts. (Matt. xviii. 35.)

The rewards of charity. Charity in thought and word has already been sufficiently dealt with in the meditation on the *Particular Judgment*: *Judge not: and you shall not be judged. Condemn not: and you shall not be condemned. Forgive: and you shall be forgiven.* (Luke vi. 37.) For the reward of charity in deed, we need go no further than Christ's prophetic description of the Last Judgment in Matthew xxv. There, those who are to be saved will be so solely on account of their practical kindness to their neighbour in his temporal necessity. Their shortcomings in other directions—doubtless many and great—are not to be so much as mentioned; while those who neglect—no question of positive unkindness here—their neighbour in his need will receive no credit for the virtues they suppose themselves to possess.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity . . . For there the Lord hath commanded blessing, and life for evermore. (Ps. cxxxii.)

(7) Fervour

In his Epistle to the Romans (xii.) St. Paul gives instructions on the Christian virtues. For the most part the acts which they imply are, in one way or another, commanded elsewhere. But in this place the Apostle lays stress, not so much on the particular gift or virtue itself as on the manner in which it is to be used or exercised. This manner may be summarized in one word : supernatural. To take a single example : *He that giveth, with simplicity* (8), *i.e.* with the single motive of doing good to his neighbour for God's sake. If the natural motive of self-glorification from being seen by men enters into the transaction, that is its own and only reward (Matt. vi. 2), and its value as a good work is lost. And so of the rest.

So the gifts or graces that God has bestowed upon us must be employed in a supernatural manner. We must try to see things as God sees them. Nor will it be easy to do this habitually. Once maybe or now and again, but human nature is strong and will assert itself. And the devil, who delights to spoil what he cannot hinder altogether, will do his part and we shall fail.

There must therefore be some further disposition that will enable us to act habitually from supernatural motives ; and this also is included by St. Paul, when he tells us to be : *In spirit fervent.* (Rom. xii. 11.)

Fervour is not impulse, nor has it anything to do with feelings. It means a continual effort of the will to attain to stability in our spiritual life ; and may be said to consist in (*a*) an abiding sense of the supernatural, (*b*) regularity and (*c*) thoroughness.

(*a*) What induces people to enter religious life ? Vocation of course ; but the immediate considerations ? Many and various, but for the most part one of two.

The first may be a profound conviction of their own spiritual weakness. This by no means implies that they are what the world calls "poor things." Such a one may have been possessed of great riches, and therefore of the power and influence that riches bring. But the grace was given to see in those riches a snare —the temptation to forget God: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thy rest: eat, drink, make good cheer.* (Luke xii. 19.) Others again may have been "strong characters." Men hastened to do their bidding, trembled at their displeasure. But however strong before men they were yet weak as water before themselves, their passions and temptations; and again grace was given to see that if they would enter the kingdom of heaven they must *become as little children* (Matt. xviii. 3)—in both cases, the sense of the supernatural.

The second were influenced by their conviction that, in order to be like Christ they must do as Christ did. He sought not His own glory (John viii. 50): they will not seek theirs. He sought not His own will (John v. 30): they will abandon their own. He became poor for their sake (2 Cor. viii. 9): they will be the same for His—the highest sense of the supernatural.

But it is not sufficient to have begun, we need help to continue in *the new and living way which he (Christ) hath dedicated for us.* (Heb. x. 20.) Easy to talk about, resolve, and even to carry into effect for a time after a retreat! But to continue, good day bad day, year in and year out, despite the untoward occurrences that will happen; above all, amid the monotony of religious life, and to be like *Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to-day: and the same for ever* (Heb. xiii. 8)—to the end of our life, which is "for ever" for us at the moment—requires no small effort of will and self-conquest. For to the best of us will come the *evil day* (Eph. vi. 13) —the day when God will seem to have abandoned us,

when prayer will seem interminable and spirituality a weariness of spirit. And the thought may commence and insist: *To what purpose is this waste?* (Matt. xxvi. 8.) Or perhaps our best work—honestly undertaken for the glory of God—fails, and to all appearance hopelessly. And we may feel impelled to say: *I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me back empty . . . call me Mara* (*that is, bitter*). (Ruth i. 20-21.) Such occasions as these show us how very little we are really worth when left to ourselves. And just as final perseverance is a gift of God we cannot merit, so is perseverance in well-doing from day to day. We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves —much less to do it, and still less to continue doing it; *but our sufficiency is from God.* (2 Cor. iii. 5.) And that sufficiency is fervour—uniformity and continuity, drawn down from heaven by prayer and unremitting effort to see men and matters in a supernatural light and carry it out in practice, irrespective of likes, dislikes or feelings.

On the other hand, there are people who seem to have no SELF—no history, no preferences, no interests even beyond the immediate work of the moment. Others, again, appear to go through life in a state of unruffled calm which no occurrence, however disturbing, can move. And other some there are who can hear their own "sentence of death," *i.e.*, the news that they are the victims of an incurable disease and, instead of being overwhelmed, calmly pursue the even tenor of their way, resolved to do what work they can for God as long as life remains. And what is all this but fervour —the grace of uniformity and continuity in the spiritual life?

(*b*) If we are fervent, we shall show it by our regularity and punctuality in our duties both spiritual and temporal. This, because our regularity and punctuality afford evidence of the importance we attach to those

duties. Every one naturally prefers to perform his duties, not only *as* he likes but *when* he likes. It is a constant source of restraint to the natural man—very often of irritation—to be summoned from work he is interested in, in order to attend to other work in which he has only a secondary interest—mayhap none at all. This holds good especially in the case of our community prayers and duties. True, we may perform our prayers of rule independently; but we risk losing the blessing attached to devotions made in common: *Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Matt. xviii. 20.) But—blessing apart—it is not only a religious, but a fervent religious I ought to be—uniform and continuous, not spasmodic and capricious. And if I postpone duties to suit my inclination there is great danger of omitting them altogether—I shall feel just as disinclined for them presently as I do now, very likely. So perhaps, in order that I may avoid this danger—and in the interests of God's service, as I tell myself—I decide to "put in" all the day's devotions at one time. If this time is at the beginning of the day, I shall probably be weary of them long before arriving at the end; and they will have done me no real good. But what does it mean? Simply that I want to finish—*i.e.*, have done with—that in which I take little or no natural interest, so that I may be at liberty to give my undivided attention to something that appeals to me more: and this although that something may be materially spiritual, such as instructions, preparation of work, etc. I am, in fact, doing the right thing at the wrong time and working to please myself, not to please God. In like manner, if I put off my devotions to the end of the day I shall be weary in mind and body; while it will be all but impossible to dismiss my work entirely and concentrate on God. And though I may have "put in a good day's work" materially, I have not done so

spiritually for, had I been fervent, I should have remembered that : *as for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord, for the time of thy good pleasure, O God.* (Ps. lxviii. 14.)

(*c*) Would I be fervent, I must not only perform my duties at the time God wishes, as laid down in my Rules, but also in the manner He wishes—as perfectly as possible, or at least as perfectly as is possible for me : *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly.* (Eccles. ix. 10.) This applies to everything I may be called upon to undertake : it is all *my Father's business.* (Luke ii. 49.) More especially does it apply to the work I find most difficult, or which has little or no natural attractions for me. All my work should be made a matter of prayer, both in general and in particular, according to its importance—and especially according to the repulsion or difficulty I find in it, which is the measure of its importance to me. But besides the supernatural agency of prayer, I have to employ the natural means of carrying out the work in question. And I must be equally earnest in both : pray as though the success of the entire matter depended upon my prayers ; and then work as though everything depended on my own efforts. And by " work " is meant everything that man can do outside prayer, including what he does not do but only submits to, *e.g.*, self-restraint and suffering. And the amount of my earnestness in both—prayer and work—will show the extent of my fervour.

True fervour will be a wholesome corrective to the natural defects of my own temperament, and also urge me on or restrain me in desolation and consolation. If I am one who finds delight in prayer—at any rate for the moment—it will remind me that—short of a miracle, which I have no right to expect—even spiritual work must be accomplished by the aid of the natural means afforded me, *e.g.*, study, adequate preparation, the

temporal work enjoined by my Rules, and so on. Our Lord in the Garden prayed until the time for action arrived; then He said: *Rise up: let us go.* (Mark xiv. 42.) On the other hand, I may be an energetic, practical individual, accustomed—perhaps too much so—to rely on my own efforts. And in that case I shall, if I am really fervent, remember that *without me* (*Jesus Christ*) *you can do nothing.* (John xv. 5.)

It is a very blessed thing to have been called to be a religious at all. So it was to have been called to be the Mother of God: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee . . .* (Luke xi. 27). But there is something more blessed still: *Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it* (28)—the *fervent in spirit.*

(8) Apostolic Sanctity.*

Apostolic sanctity consists in three things, viz., Devotedness to the Person and interests of Jesus Christ, Earnestness and Disinterestedness.

I. Devotedness to the Person and Interests of Jesus Christ.—The source of all sanctity is the love of God. True it is that a man may be converted in the first instance by fear of God's judgments, but if he is to remain converted he will have to go further in the right way. For he who is content with avoiding grave sin—taking no care to refrain from deliberate venial sin the while—will gradually relapse once more: *he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.* (Ecclus. xix. 1.) Consequently, in order to be faithful in greater matters he must be faithful in lesser ones

* The points of this Consideration are taken from *Meditation Leaflets*, by Fr. Joseph Egger, S.J.

(Luke xvi. 10), and thus show his love for God: *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me.* (John xiv. 21.)

But God would have man love Him, not merely from hope of reward but for Himself—because He is so good. He has given proof beyond measure of His own love. For, while drawing a veil between earth and heaven He has deigned to lift a corner of it, so that man may not be left to his own feeble faith and hope, but have some visible and tangible reason for them. Here we notice that, whereas the judgments and punishments of God remain shrouded in impenetrable mystery—indeed we only know of their existence by faith; a fact of which the unbeliever is not slow to make capital—there is abundant evidence of His love and mercy in His dealings with mankind.

The chief of these evidences is the *manner* of the Redemption: the Incarnation. Man having fallen from his first high estate and forfeited his hopes of heaven, and God having deigned to restore them: the Redemption might have been wrought in numberless inscrutable ways. Then, having been accomplished, the *fact* might have been revealed, together with a command to accept it as a truth of faith. But Almighty God would not only accomplish the Redemption, but do so in some *manner* that man should understand and might appeal to him. So the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was to come to earth in the form of a man and suffer and die in atonement for the sins of the world. He did so—proving sufficiently that He was God by His works: *though you will not believe me, believe the works* (John x. 38); but conclusively by His Resurrection by His own power. He also proved Himself to be Man by being born as a Man, living as a Man and dying as a Man. Here then is visible evidence of God's love for man: God Himself come to earth in

human form, laying down as the supreme test of love : *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John xv. 13), and fulfilling it in His own divine Person.

So while God can say : *What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?* (Isa. v. 4) ; man is constrained to ask : *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to me?* (Ps. cxv. 12.) There is only one thing God asks : *My son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26)—that is to say, that man, being free to give his love or withhold it, shall consent to give it.

This love is not, or ought not to be a mere sentiment or barren feeling of affection, but a union and exchange of goods, ideas and interests. Of material goods God has no need : *Thou art my God, for thou hast no need of my goods.* (Ps. xv. 2.) But we have a soul, and that soul should be devoted to His service. We are endowed with talents, and those talents should be utilized in His interests. If, like the servant in the Gospel (Matt. xxv. 15), I have only one talent, that one should be made the most of for His glory. Of ideas : God is possessed of but one idea for man, that since *he hath made all things for himself* (Prov. xvi. 4), man should come to recognize that nothing is of any real importance but Him. No one (He tells us) is so good a Master : *My yoke is sweet and my burden light* (Matt. xi. 30) ; therefore man should respond by acknowledging that none is worth serving save God. Of interests : He is our greatest. He was our first beginning, He will be our last end (Apoc. xxii. 13) ; it behoves us to make ourselves His in the brief intervening period.

Our love of God then must show itself by the conscious, determined disposition of the will and by the acts arising from it. And if we are to love God as He would be loved—*with our whole heart and with our whole*

soul (Mark xii. 30)—it will not be sufficient to resolve and carry out *the right thing*—the thing that is commanded; we must go further and devote our efforts to accomplishing *the best thing*—the thing that Christ signified when He said: *Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matt. v. 48.)

And these acts of ours must be persevering: performed with a regularity as great at the end of a long term of years as at their commencement. But I have nothing to show for them! On the contrary, you have everything to show for them: you are still doing them and intend to continue doing them—any less effort and perhaps you would not have done so. Persevering again in the patient performance of distasteful work—work that holds out no hope of success in our time. One of our missionaries in China was asked by a Protestant traveller, whether he thought that any result would accrue from the labours of himself and his colleagues which, even in the fulness of time, might be remotely described as the christianization of China. "Never!" replied the missionary, emphatically "Then why are you here?" "I am here in pursuance of the divine command to go and teach all nations Like the soldier in the ranks, I obey the orders of my superior; without seeing in the least what good is to come of them." And yet (continues the narrator) few men have done so much, or acquired such an influence as this missionary.

So our love for God will lead us to embrace the will and interests of Jesus Christ—the glory of God in the sanctification and salvation of souls. Consequently it will lead us to estimate at their true value the souls which He died to save. And in particular it will lead me to commence with the soul on which—given good will aided by the grace of God—I cannot fail: my own. Concurrently with that I may interest myself in the soul of my neighbour—observing that the more care-

fully I cultivate my own soul the greater will be the fruit I shall produce in his. The man of the world—careless as he very often is about spiritual matters—has a very keen instinct ; and it may be almost hopeless to attempt to convince or convert him by what we *say*, unless at the same time appears what we *do*. "I have often walked in the fields," said a frequent visitor to Ars, "without hearing a single oath or unseemly expression. I remarked this to one of the peasants, who replied, with great simplicity : 'We are no better than other people ; but we should be ashamed to do such things so near to a saint.'"

II. Earnestness.—The more we are devoted to Jesus Christ and His interests the greater will be our sanctity. The world around us produces in numbers men and women who are devoted to one pursuit. As often as not it is an unselfish one : some branch of learning studied for its own sake, some scheme of social reform, some work of charity. Cheerfully they undergo the drudgery—bear with the opposition perhaps—attending the first stages ; disregard their health and comfort, reduce their expenses in other directions—in fact, they look on life and all connected with it from the standpoint of their own objective. And thus by their very earnestness they become experts in their particular line. We might well take example from them—we, whose aim it is to become experts in the highest line of all : sanctity. And we have a stronger incentive than they. The result of their life's work passes with them ; the work may remain but the worker goes hence : *they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown*. Our sanctity and the tale of the souls we have helped to save will go with us to the throne of God : *but we an incorruptible one*. (1 Cor. ix. 25.)

And there is earnestness and earnestness. The assistant to the professor of science may work con-

scientiously and well during working hours; then he dismisses matters from his mind and goes home: he has done his duty. The professor toils on into the night, carries his subject to rest with him and probably dreams about it. Both are in earnest about the matter in hand: but one only as far as it goes, the other as far as he can make it go. So also a priest or religious who does what is of obligation—Mass, spiritual duties, class, district and so on—all done well, very likely—but goes no further than professional necessity dictates: he is in earnest, too; but with an earnestness very different from that of the saints, who could never persuade themselves that they had done sufficient for the glory of God. They were enthusiasts and the best work is only done by enthusiasts; and if we would do this best work we have to become enthusiasts too.

III. Disinterestedness.—Real devotedness will be disinterested: *Charity is not ambitious, seeketh not her own.* (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) Religion is sometimes stigmatized as merely a refined form of selfishness. Self-*seeking* may be, in that we seek to save our own souls; but not *selfish.* The selfish man desires to profit at the expense of others: the spiritual man desires to gain—and at his own expense—in order that he may share with them. Christ our Lord displayed the highest possible degree of disinterestedness. The accidental glory of His Father excepted, He had nothing to gain by man's salvation, nothing to lose by his eternal ruin. And yet He *emptied himself, taking the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 7), for the salvation of souls. His apostles. the holy missionaries of the Catholic Church, have—in due degree and as far as they could—done the same. Abandoning a life of comparative ease and comfort, they have, at the call of obedience but more usually voluntarily, emptied themselves of everything pleasant to nature, content to work out their lives among un-

civilized peoples and seek nothing but the good of souls ; though that was—as often happened—only to be purchased by their own blood. And we who have not been, and possibly never may be called to the foreign missions or martyrdom, can still show our disinterestedness by emptying us of SELF : desiring only that come what may or happen what will God's work for the salvation of souls may be carried on.

Finally, a distinctive mark of sanctity is cheerfulness. God wishes us to be happy in His service, and who should be happy if not priests and religious ? God has given us the better part which He will not take away from us ; so that—given good will on our part —the future is secure. For the rest, we are the agents of Christ on earth : *God as it were exhorting by us* (2 Cor. v. 20), and what nobler career could we desire ? Trials and tribulations there must be, for such is the lot of man upon earth—besides which, have we not asked for them ? They are the best, and indeed the only thing we can offer to God ; for what else remains to us to offer ? If then, when they come upon us, we are cast down, inclined to relax our efforts, or only submit to them because we must, we are giving *with sadness or of necessity*. But if we meet them bravely, offering them to God with a generous heart, the matter becomes right at once. Happiness reigns once more, for we become the *cheerful giver* that God loves. *And God is able to make all grace abound in you : that ye . . . may abound to every good work.* (2 Cor. ix. 7-8.)

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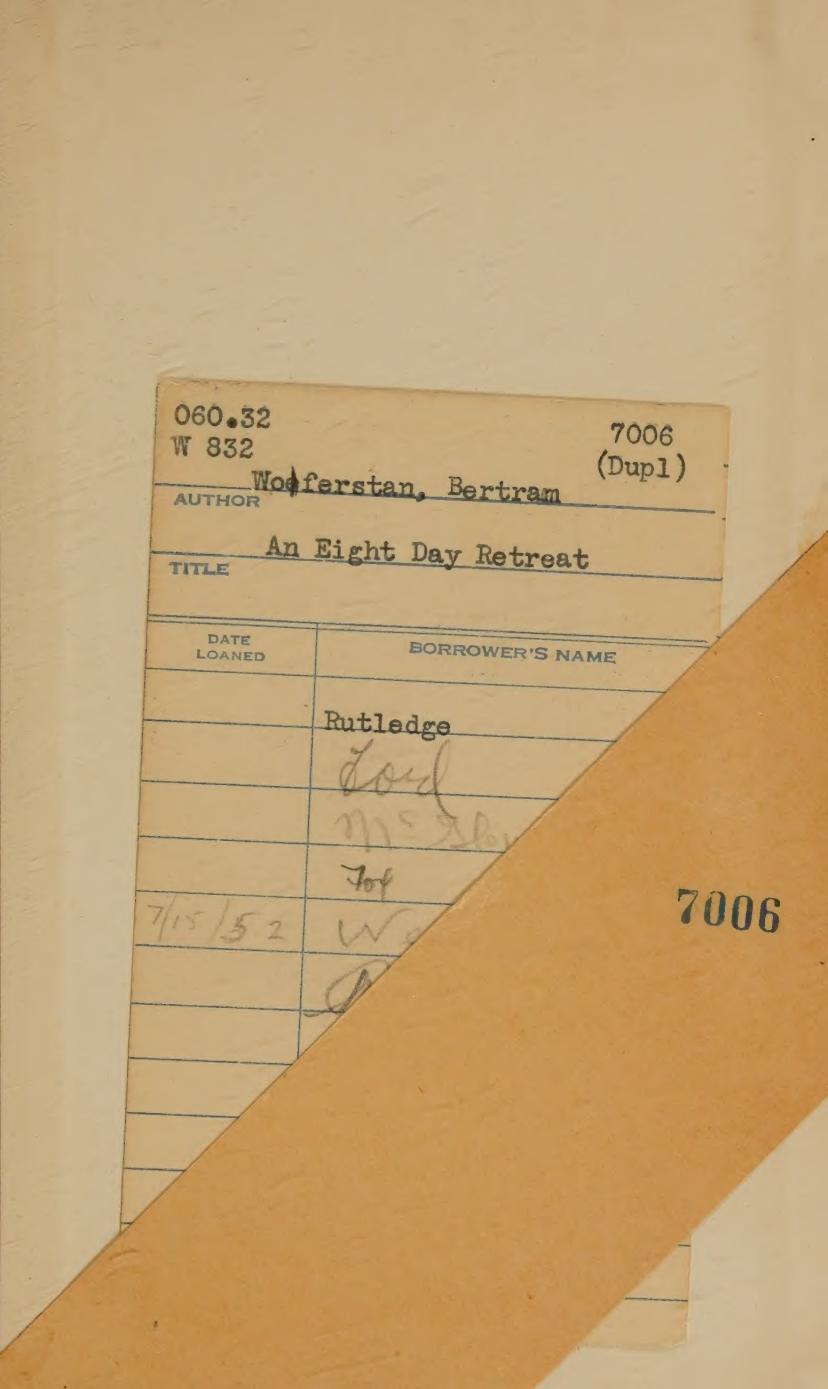
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An Eight Day Retreat
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